MINISTRY OF CULTURE · GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
1807
GSL

AN ESSAY

ON THE

PRINCIPLE OF POPULATION;

OR, A

VIEW OF ITS PAST AND PRESENT EFFECTS

ON

HUMAN HAPPINESS;

WITH

AN INQUIRY INTO OUR PROSPECTS RESPECTING THE FUTURE REMOVAL OR MITIGATION OF THE EVILS WHICH IT OCCASIONS.

By T. R. MALTHUS, A. M.

LATE FELLOW OF JESUS COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE,

AND PROFESSOR OF HISTORY AND POLITICAL ECONOMY IN THE EAST INDIA COLLEGE, HERTFORDSHIRE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

THE FOURTH EDITION.

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BY T. BENSLEY, BOLT COURT, FLEET STREET.

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obſervations will be ſufficient to ſhow, how completely this theory is contradicted, when it is applied to the real and not to an imaginary ſtate of things.

In the laſt diviſion of the work, which treats of the future progreſs of man towards perfection, M. Condorcet ſays, that comparing in the different civilized nations of Europe the actual population with the extent of territory, and obſerving their cultivation, their induſtry, their diviſions of labour, and their means of ſubſiſtence, we ſhall ſee, that it would be impoſſible to preſerve the ſame means of ſubſiſtence, and conſequently the ſame population, without a number of individuals who have no other means of ſupplying their wants than their induſtry.

Having allowed the neceſſity of ſuch a claſs of men, and adverting afterwards to the precarious revenue of thoſe families, that would depend ſo entirely on the life and health of their chief,[a] he ſays very juſtly, "There exiſts then a "neceſſary cauſe of inequality, of dependence, "and even of miſery, which menaces without

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" ceaſing the moſt numerous and active claſs " of our ſocieties." The difficulty is juſt and well ſtated; but his mode of removing it will, I fear, be found totally inefficacious.

By the application of calculations to the probabilities of life, and the intereſt of money, he propoſes, that a fund ſhould be eſtabliſhed, which ſhould aſſure to the old an aſſiſtance produced in part by their own former ſavings, and in part by the ſavings of individuals, who in making the ſame ſacrifice die before they reap the benefit of it. The ſame or a ſimilar fund ſhould give aſſiſtance to women and children who loſe their huſbands or fathers; and afford a capital to thoſe who were of an age to found a new family, ſufficient for the developement of their induſtry. Theſe eſtabliſhments, he obſerves, might be made in the name and under the protection of the ſociety. Going ſtill further, he ſays, that by the juſt application of calculations, means might be found of more completely preſerving a ſtate of equality, by preventing credit from being the excluſive privilege of great fortunes, and yet giving it a baſis equally ſolid, and by rendering the progreſs of induſtry and the activity of commerce leſs dependent on great capitaliſts.

Such eſtabliſhments and calculations may ap-

ESSAY, &c.

BOOK III.

OF THE DIFFERENT SYSTEMS OR EXPEDIENTS WHICH HAVE BEEN PROPOSED, OR HAVE PREVAILED IN SOCIETY, AS THEY AFFECT THE EVILS ARISING FROM THE PRINCIPLE OF POPULATION.

CHAP. I.

Of Syſtems of Equality. Wallace. Condorcet.

To a perſon who views the paſt and preſent ſtates of mankind in the light in which they have appeared in the two preceding books, it cannot but be a matter of aſtoniſhment, that all the writers on the perfectibility of man and of ſociety, who have noticed the argument of the principle of population, treat it always very ſlightly, and invariably repreſent the difficulties

ariſing from it as at a great and almoſt immeaſurable diſtance. Even Mr. Wallace, who thought the argument itſelf of ſo much weight as to deſtroy his whole ſyſtem of equality, did not ſeem to be aware, that any difficulty would ariſe from this cauſe, till the whole earth had been cultivated like a garden, and was incapable of any further increaſe of produce. Were this really the caſe, and were a beautiful ſyſtem of equality in other reſpects practicable, I cannot think that our ardour in the purſuit of ſuch a ſcheme ought to be damped by the contemplation of ſo remote a difficulty. An event at ſuch a diſtance might fairly be left to providence. But the truth is, that, if the view of the argument given in this eſſay be juſt, the difficulty, ſo far from being remote, would be imminent and immediate. At every period during the progreſs of cultivation, from the preſent moment to the time when the whole earth was become like a garden, the diſtreſs for want of food would be conſtantly preſſing on all mankind, if they were equal. Though the produce of the earth would be increaſing every year, population would be tending to increaſe much faſter, and the redundancy muſt neceſſarily be checked by

by the periodical or conſtant action of moral reſtraint, vice, or miſery.

M. Condorcet's *Eſquiſſe d'un tableau hiſtorique des progrès de l'eſprit humain* was written, it is ſaid, under the preſſure of that cruel proſcription, which terminated in his death. If he had no hopes of its being ſeen during his life, and of its intereſting France in his favour, it is a ſingular inſtance of the attachment of a man to principles, which every day's experience was, ſo fatally for himſelf, contradicting. To ſee the human mind, in one of the moſt enlightened nations of the world, debaſed by ſuch a fermentation of diſguſting paſſions, of fear, cruelty, malice, revenge, ambition, madneſs, and folly, as would have diſgraced the moſt ſavage nations in the moſt barbarous age, muſt have been ſuch a tremendous ſhock to his ideas of the neceſſary and inevitable progreſs of the human mind, as nothing but the firmeſt conviction of the truth of his principles, in ſpite of all appearances, could have withſtood.

This poſthumous publication is only a ſketch of a much larger work, which he propoſed ſhould be executed. It neceſſarily wants therefore that detail and application, which can alone prove the truth of any theory. A few

obſervations will be ſufficient to ſhow, how completely this theory is contradicted, when it is applied to the real and not to an imaginary ſtate of things.

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Such eſtabliſhments and calculations may ap-

pear very promiſing upon paper; but when applied to real life, they will be found to be abſolutely nugatory. M. Condorcet allows, that a claſs of people which maintains itſelf entirely by induſtry is neceſſary to every ſtate. Why does he allow this? No other reaſon can well be aſſigned, than becauſe he conceives, that the labour neceſſary to procure ſubſiſtence for an extended population will not be performed without the goad of neceſſity. If, by eſtabliſhments upon the plans that have been mentioned, this ſpur to induſtry be removed; if the idle and negligent be placed upon the ſame footing with regard to their credit, and the future ſupport of their wives and families, as the active and induſtrious; can we expect to ſee men exert that animated activity in bettering their condition, which now forms the maſter-ſpring of public proſperity? If an inquiſition were to be eſtabliſhed to examine the claims of each individual, and to determine whether he had or had not exerted himſelf to the utmoſt, and to grant or refuſe aſſiſtance accordingly, this would be little elſe than a repetition upon a larger ſcale of the Engliſh poor laws, and would be completely deſtructive of the true principles of liberty and equality.

But

But independently of this great objection to theſe eſtabliſhments, and ſuppoſing for a moment, that they would give no check to production, the greateſt difficulty remains yet behind.

Were every man ſure of a comfortable proviſion for a family, almoſt every man would have one; and were the riſing generation free from the "killing froſt" of miſery, population muſt increaſe with unuſual rapidity. Of this M. Condorcet ſeems to be fully aware himſelf; and after having deſcribed further improvements, he ſays,

"But in this progreſs of induſtry and happi-
"neſs, each generation will be called to more
"extended enjoyments, and in conſequence,
"by the phyſical conſtitution of the human
"frame, to an increaſe in the number of indi-
"viduals. Muſt not there arrive a period then
"when theſe laws equally neceſſary ſhall coun-
"teract each other; when the increaſe of the
"number of men ſurpaſſing their means of ſub-
"ſiſtence, the neceſſary reſult muſt be, either
"a continual diminution of happineſs and po-
"pulation—a movement truly retrograde; or
"at leaſt a kind of oſcillation between good and
"evil? In ſocieties arrived at this term, will not
"this oſcillation be a conſtantly ſubſiſting cauſe

" of periodical miſery? Will it not mark the " limit, when all further melioration will be- " come impoſſible, and point out that term to " the perfectibility of the human race, which " it may reach in the courſe of ages, but can " never paſs?" He then adds,

" There is no perſon who does not ſee how " very diſtant ſuch a period is from us. But " ſhall we ever arrive at it? It is equally im- " poſſible to pronounce for, or againſt, the fu- " ture realization of an event, which cannot " take place but at an æra, when the human " race will have attained improvements, of which " we can at preſent ſcarcely form a conception."

M. Condorcet's picture of what may be expected to happen, when the number of men ſhall ſurpaſs their means of ſubſiſtence, is juſtly drawn. The oſcillation which he deſcribes will certainly take place, and will without doubt be a conſtantly ſubſiſting cauſe of periodical miſery. The only point in which I differ from M. Condorcet in this deſcription is, with regard to the period when it may be applied to the human race. M. Condorcet thinks, that it cannot poſſibly be applicable, but at an æra extremely diſtant. If the proportion between the natural increaſe of population and food, which was ſtated

ſtated in the beginning of this eſſay, and which has received conſiderable confirmation from the poverty that has been found to prevail in every ſtage of human ſociety, be in any degree near the truth; it will appear on the contrary, that the period when the number of men ſurpaſſes their means of ſubſiſtence has long ſince arrived; and that this neceſſary oſcillation, this conſtantly ſubſiſting cauſe of periodical miſery, has exiſted ever ſince we have had any hiſtories of mankind, and continues to exiſt at the preſent moment.

M. Condorcet however goes on to ſay, that ſhould the period, which he conceives to be ſo diſtant, ever arrive, the human race, and the advocates of the perfectibility of man, need not be alarmed at it. He then proceeds to remove the difficulty in a manner, which I profeſs not to underſtand. Having obſerved, that the ridiculous prejudices of ſuperſtition would by that time have ceaſed to throw over morals a corrupt and degrading auſterity, he alludes either to a promiſcuous concubinage, which would prevent breeding, or to ſomething elſe as unnatural. To remove the difficulty in this way will ſurely, in the opinion of moſt men, be to deſtroy that virtue and purity of manners, which the

the advocates of equality, and of the perfectibility of man, profeſs to be the end and object of their views.

The laſt queſtion which M. Condorcet propoſes for examination is, the organic perfectibility of man. He obſerves, if the proofs which have been already given, and which, in their developement, will receive greater force in the work itſelf, are ſufficient to eſtabliſh the indefinite perfectibility of man, upon the ſuppoſition of the ſame natural faculties and the ſame organization which he has at preſent; what will be the certainty, what the extent of our hopes, if this organization, theſe natural faculties themſelves, be ſuſceptible of melioration?

From the improvement of medicine; from the uſe of more wholeſome food and habitations; from a manner of living, which will improve the ſtrength of the body by exerciſe, without impairing it by exceſs; from the deſtruction of the two great cauſes of the degradation of man, miſery and too great riches; from the gradual removal of tranſmiſſible and contagious diſorders by the improvement of phyſical knowledge, rendered more efficacious by the progreſs of reaſon and of ſocial order; he infers, that, though man will not abſolutely become immortal, yet the

the duration between his birth and natural death will increaſe without ceaſing, will have no aſſignable term, and may properly be expreſſed by the word indefinite. He then defines this word to mean either a conſtant approach to an unlimited extent without ever reaching it; or an increaſe in the immenſity of ages to an extent greater than any aſſignable quantity.

But ſurely the application of this term in either of theſe ſenſes to the duration of human life is in the higheſt degree unphiloſophical, and totally unwarranted by any appearances in the laws of nature. Variations from different cauſes are eſſentially diſtinct from a regular and unretrograde increaſe. The average duration of human life will to a certain degree vary from healthy or unhealthy climates, from wholeſome or unwholeſome food, from virtuous or vicious manners, and other cauſes; but it may be fairly doubted, whether there has been really the ſmalleſt perceptible advance in the natural duration of human life, ſince firſt we had any authentic hiſtory of man. The prejudices of all ages have indeed been directly contrary to this ſuppoſition; and though I would not lay much ſtreſs upon theſe prejudices, they will in ſome meaſure tend

tend to prove, that there has been no marked advance in an oppoſite direction.

It may perhaps be ſaid, that the world is yet ſo young, ſo completely in its infancy, that it ought not to be expected, that any difference ſhould appear ſo ſoon.

If this be the caſe, there is at once an end of all human ſcience. The whole train of reaſonings from effects to cauſes will be deſtroyed. We may ſhut our eyes to the book of nature, as it will no longer be of any uſe to read it. The wildeſt and moſt improbable conjectures may be advanced with as much certainty, as the moſt juſt and ſublime theories, founded on careful and reiterated experiments. We may return again to the old mode of philoſophiſing, and make facts bend to ſyſtems, inſtead of eſtabliſhing ſyſtems upon facts. The grand and conſiſtent theory of Newton will be placed upon the ſame footing as the wild and eccentric hypotheſes of Deſcartes. In ſhort, if the laws of nature be thus fickle and inconſtant; if it can be affirmed, and be believed, that they will change, when for ages and ages they have appeared immutable; the human mind will no longer have any incitements to inquiry, but muſt

muſt remain fixed in inactive torpor, or amuſe itſelf only in bewildering dreams and extravagant fancies.

The conſtancy of the laws of nature, and of effects and cauſes, is the foundation of all human knowledge; and if, without any previous obſervable ſymptoms or indications of a change, we can infer, that a change will take place, we may as well make any aſſertion whatever; and think it as unreaſonable to be contradicted, in affirming that the moon will come in contact with the earth to morrow, as in ſaying that the ſun will riſe at its appointed time.

With regard to the duration of human life, there does not appear to have exiſted, from the earlieſt ages of the world to the preſent moment, the ſmalleſt permanent ſymptom or indication of increaſing prolongation. The obſervable effects of climate, habit, diet, and other cauſes, on length of life, have furniſhed the pretext for aſſerting its indefinite extention; and the ſandy foundation on which the argument reſts is, that becauſe the limit of human life is undefined, becauſe you cannot mark its preciſe term, and ſay ſo far exactly ſhall it go, and no further, therefore its extent may increaſe for ever, and be properly termed indefinite or unlimited.

But

But the fallacy and abſurdity of this argument will ſufficiently appear from a ſlight examination of what M. Condorcet calls the organic perfectibility or degeneration of the race of plants and animals, which, he ſays, may be regarded as one of the general laws of nature.

I have been told, that it is a maxim among ſome of the improvers of cattle, that you may breed to any degree of nicety you pleaſe; and they found this maxim upon another, which is, that ſome of the offſpring will poſſeſs the deſirable qualities of the parents in a greater degree. In the famous Leiceſterſhire breed of ſheep, the object is to procure them with ſmall heads and ſmall legs. Proceeding upon theſe breeding maxims it is evident, that we might go on, till the heads and legs were evaneſcent quantities; but this is ſo palpable an abſurdity, that we may be quite ſure, that the premiſes are not juſt, and that there really is a limit, though we cannot ſee it, or ſay exactly where it is. In this caſe, the point of the greateſt degree of improvement, or the ſmalleſt ſize of the head and legs, may be ſaid to be undefined; but this is very different from unlimited, or from indefinite, in M. Condorcet's acceptation of the term. Though I may not be able in the preſent inſtance to mark the limit,

limit, at which further improvement will ſtop, I can very eaſily mention a point, at which it will not arrive. I ſhould not ſcruple to aſſert, that were the breeding to continue for ever, the heads and legs of theſe ſheep would never be ſo ſmall as the head and legs of a rat.

It cannot be true therefore, that among animals ſome of the offspring will poſſeſs the deſirable qualities of the parents in a greater degree; or that animals are indefinitely perfectible.

The progreſs of a wild plant to a beautiful garden flower is perhaps more marked and ſtriking, than any thing that takes place among animals; yet even here it would be the height of abſurdity to aſſert, that the progreſs was unlimited or indefinite. One of the moſt obvious features of the improvement is the increaſe of ſize. The flower has grown gradually larger by cultivation. If the progreſs were really unlimited, it might be increaſed, ad infinitum; but this is ſo groſs an abſurdity, that we may be quite ſure, that among plants as well as among animals there is a limit to improvement, though we do not exactly know where it is. It is probable, that the gardeners who contend for flower prizes have often applied ſtronger dreſſing

ſing without ſucceſs. At the ſame time it would be highly preſumptuous in any man to ſay, that he had ſeen the fineſt carnation or anemone that could ever be made to grow. He might however aſſert without the ſmalleſt chance of being contradicted by a future fact, that no carnation or anemone could ever by cultivation be increaſed to the ſize of a large cabbage; and yet there are aſſignable quantities greater than a cabbage. No man can ſay, that he has ſeen the largeſt ear of wheat, or the largeſt oak, that could ever grow; but he might eaſily, and with perfect certainty, name a point of magnitude, at which they would not arrive. In all theſe caſes therefore, a careful diſtinction ſhould be made between an unlimited progreſs, and a progreſs where the limit is merely undefined.

It will be ſaid perhaps, that the reaſon why plants and animals cannot increaſe indefinitely in ſize is, that they would fall by their own weight. I anſwer, how do we know this but from experience? from experience of the degree of ſtrength, with which theſe bodies are formed. I know, that a carnation long before it reached the ſize of a cabbage would not be ſupported by its ſtalk; but I only know this from my experience

rience of the weakneſs and want of tenacity in the materials of a carnation ſtalk. There might be ſubſtances of the ſame ſize that would ſupport as large a head as a cabbage.

The reaſons of the mortality of plants are at preſent perfectly unknown to us. No man can ſay why ſuch a plant is annual, another biennial, and another endures for ages. The whole affair in all theſe caſes, in plants, animals, and in the human race, is an affair of experience; and I only conclude, that man is mortal, becauſe the invariable experience of all ages has proved the mortality of thoſe materials, of which his viſible body is made.

"What can we reaſon but from what we know?"

Sound philoſophy will not authoriſe me to alter this opinion of the mortality of man on earth, till it can be clearly proved, that the human race has made, and is making, a decided progreſs towards an illimitable extent of life. And the chief reaſon why I adduced the two particular inſtances from animals and plants was to expoſe and illuſtrate, if I could, the fallacy of that argument, which infers an unlimited progreſs merely becauſe ſome partial improvement has taken place, and that the limit of this improvement cannot be preciſely aſcertained.

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The capacity of improvement in plants and animals, to a certain degree, no perſon can poſſibly doubt. A clear and decided progreſs has already been made; and yet I think it appears, that it would be highly abſurd to ſay, that this progreſs has no limits. In human life, though there are great variations from different cauſes, it may be doubted whether, ſince the world began, any organic improvement whatever of the human frame can be clearly aſcertained. The foundations therefore, on which the arguments for the organic perfectibility of man reſt, are unuſually weak, and can only be conſidered as mere conjectures. It does not however by any means ſeem impoſſible, that, by an attention to breed, a certain degree of improvement ſimilar to that among animals might take place among men. Whether intellect could be communicated may be a matter of doubt; but ſize, ſtrength, beauty, complexion, and perhaps even longevity, are in a degree tranſmiſſible. The error does not ſeem to lie in ſuppoſing a ſmall degree of improvement poſſible, but in not diſcriminating between a ſmall improvement, the limit of which is undefined, and an improvement really unlimited. As the human race however could not be improved in this way, without condemning

demning all the bad ſpecimens to celibacy, it is not probable, that an attention to breed ſhould ever become general; indeed I know of no well-directed attempts of this kind except in the ancient family of the Bickerſtaffs, who are ſaid to have been very ſucceſsful in whitening the ſkins and increaſing the height of their race by prudent marriages, particularly by that very judicious croſs with Maud the milk-maid, by which ſome capital defects in the conſtitutions of the family were corrected.

It will not be neceſſary, I think, in order more completely to ſhow the improbability of any approach in man towards immortality on earth, to urge the very great additional weight, that an increaſe in the duration of life would give to the argument of population.

M. Condorcet's book may be conſidered not only as a ſketch of the opinions of a celebrated individual, but of many of the literary men in France at the beginning of the revolution. As ſuch, though merely a ſketch, it ſeems worthy of attention.

Many, I doubt not, will think, that the attempting gravely to controvert ſo abſurd a paradox, as the immortality of man on earth, or indeed even the perfectibility of man and ſociety,

ciety, is a waſte of time and words; and that ſuch unfounded conjectures are beſt anſwered by neglect. I profeſs, however, to be of a different opinion. When paradoxes of this kind are advanced by ingenious and able men, neglect has no tendency to convince them of their miſtakes. Priding themſelves on what they conceive to be a mark of the reach and ſize of their own underſtandings, of the extent and comprehenſiveneſs of their views; they will look upon this neglect merely as an indication of poverty and narrowneſs in the mental exertions of their contemporaries; and only think, that the world is not yet prepared to receive their ſublime truths.

On the contrary, a candid inveſtigation of theſe ſubjects, accompanied with a perfect readineſs to adopt any theory warranted by ſound philoſophy, may have a tendency to convince them, that in forming improbable and unfounded hypotheſes, ſo far from enlarging the bounds of human ſcience, they are contracting it; ſo far from promoting the improvement of the human mind, they are obſtructing it: they are throwing us back again almoſt into the infancy of knowledge; and weakening the foundations of that mode of philoſophiſing, under the

the auſpices of which ſcience has of late made ſuch rapid advances. The late rage for wide and unreſtrained ſpeculation ſeems to have been a kind of mental intoxication, ariſing perhaps from the great and unexpected diſcoveries, which had been made in various branches of ſcience. To men elate and giddy with ſuch ſucceſſes, every thing appeared to be within the graſp of human powers; and under this illuſion they confounded ſubjects where no real progreſs could be proved, with thoſe, where the progreſs had been marked, certain, and acknowledged. Could they be perſuaded to ſober themſelves with a little ſevere and chaſtiſed thinking, they would ſee, that the cauſe of truth and of ſound philoſophy cannot but ſuffer, by ſubſtituting wild flights and unſupported aſſertions, for patient inveſtigation and well-authenticated proofs.

CHAP. II.

Of Syſtems of Equality. Godwin.

In reading Mr. Godwin's ingenious work on political juſtice, it is impoſſible not to be ſtruck with the ſpirit and energy of his ſtyle, the force and preciſion of ſome of his reaſonings, the ardent tone of his thoughts, and particularly with that impreſſive earneſtneſs of manner, which gives an air of truth to the whole. At the ſame time it muſt be confeſſed, that he has not proceeded in his inquiries with the caution that ſound philoſophy requires. His concluſions are often unwarranted by his premiſes. He fails ſometimes in removing objections, which he himſelf brings forward. He relies too much on general and abſtract propoſitions, which will not admit of application. And his conjectures certainly far outſtrip the modeſty of nature.

The ſyſtem of equality, which Mr. Godwin propoſes, is, on a firſt view, the moſt beautiful and engaging of any that has yet appeared. A melioration of ſociety to be produced merely by

by reaſon and conviction gives more promiſe of permanence than any change effected and maintained by force. The unlimited exerciſe of private judgment is a doctrine grand and captivating, and has a vaſt ſuperiority over thoſe ſyſtems, where every individual is in a manner the ſlave of the public. The ſubſtitution of benevolence, as the maſterſpring and moving principle of ſociety, inſtead of ſelf-love, appears at firſt ſight to be a conſummation devoutly to be wiſhed. In ſhort, it is impoſſible to contemplate the whole of this fair picture, without emotions of delight and admiration, accompanied with an ardent longing for the period of its accompliſhment. But alas! that moment can never arrive. The whole is little better than a dream—a phantom of the imagination. Theſe "gorgeous palaces" of happineſs and immortality, theſe "ſolemn temples" of truth and virtue, will diſſolve, "like the baſeleſs fabric of a viſion," when we awaken to real life, and contemplate the genuine ſituation of man on earth.

Mr. Godwin, at the concluſion of the third chapter of his eighth book, ſpeaking of population, says, "There is a principle in human ſo-
"ciety, by which population is perpetually kept
"down to the level of the means of ſubſiſtence.

" Thus among the wandering tribes of America " and Aſia we never find, through the lapſe of " ages, that population has ſo increaſed, as to " render neceſſary the cultivation of the earth."* This principle, which Mr. Godwin thus mentions as ſome myſterious and occult cauſe, and which he does not attempt to inveſtigate, has appeared to be the grinding law of neceſſity—miſery, and the fear of miſery.

The great error, under which Mr. Godwin labours throughout his whole work, is, the attributing of almoſt all the vices and miſery, that prevail in civil ſociety, to human inſtitutions. Political regulations, and the eſtabliſhed adminiſtration of property, are, with him, the fruitful ſources of all evil, the hotbeds of all the crimes that degrade mankind. Were this really a true ſtate of the caſe, it would not ſeem an abſolutely hopeleſs taſk, to remove evil completely from the world; and reaſon ſeems to be the proper and adequate inſtrument for effecting ſo great a purpoſe. But the truth is, that though human inſtitutions appear to be and indeed often are, the obvious and obtruſive cauſes of much miſchief to mankind, they are, in reality, light and ſuperficial, in compariſon with thoſe deeper-ſeated cauſes of evil, which reſult

*p. 460, 8vo. 2d edit.

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from the laws of nature and the paſſions of mankind.

In a chapter on the benefits attendant upon a ſyſtem of equality, Mr. Godwin ſays, " The " ſpirit of oppreſſion, the ſpirit of ſervility, and " the ſpirit of fraud, theſe are the immediate " growth of the eſtabliſhed adminiſtration of " property. They are alike hoſtile to intellec- " tual improvement. The other vices of envy, " malice, and revenge, are their inſeparable " companions. In a ſtate of ſociety where men " lived in the midſt of plenty, and where all " ſhared alike the bounties of nature, theſe ſen- " timents would inevitably expire. The nar- " row principle of ſelfiſhneſs would vaniſh. No " man being obliged to guard his little ſtore, or " provide with anxiety and pain for his reſtleſs " wants, each would loſe his individual exiſt- " ence in the thought of the general good. No " man would be an enemy to his neighbours, " for they would have no ſubject of contention; " and of conſequence philanthropy would re- " ſume the empire which reaſon aſſigns her. " Mind would be delivered from her perpetual " anxiety about corporal ſupport; and free to " expatiate in the field of thought which is

" congenial

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" congenial to her. Each would aſſiſt the in-
" quiries of all.[a]"

This would indeed be a happy ſtate. But that it is merely an imaginary picture with ſcarcely a feature near the truth, the reader, I am afraid, is already too well convinced.

Man cannot live in the midſt of plenty. All cannot ſhare alike the bounties of nature. Were there no eſtabliſhed adminiſtration of property, every man would be obliged to guard with force his little ſtore. Selfiſhneſs would be triumphant. The ſubjects of contention would be perpetual. Every individual would be under a conſtant anxiety about corporal ſupport, and not a ſingle intellect would be left free to expatiate in the field of thought.

How little Mr. Godwin has turned his attention to the real ſtate of human ſociety will ſufficiently appear, from the manner in which he endeavours to remove the difficulty of an overcharged population. He ſays, " The obvious
" anſwer to this objection is, that to reaſon
" thus is to foreſee difficulties at a great diſ-
" tance. Three fourths of the habitable globe
" are now uncultivated. The parts already culti-

[a] Political Juſtice, b. viii, c. iii, p. 458.

" vated

"vated are capable of immeaſurable improve-
"ment. Myriads of centuries of ſtill increaſ-
"ing population may paſs away, and the earth
"be ſtill found ſufficient for the ſubſiſtence of
"its inhabitants."[a]

I have already pointed out the error of ſuppoſing, that no diſtreſs or difficulty would ariſe from a redundant population, before the earth abſolutely refuſed to produce any more. But let us imagine for a moment Mr. Godwin's ſyſtem of equality realized in its utmoſt extent, and ſee how ſoon this difficulty might be expected to preſs, under ſo perfect a form of ſociety. A theory that will not admit of application cannot poſſibly be juſt.

Let us ſuppoſe all the cauſes of vice and miſery in this iſland removed. War and contention ceaſe. Unwholeſome trades and manufactories do not exiſt. Crowds no longer collect together in great and peſtilent cities for purpoſes of court intrigue, of commerce, and vicious gratification. Simple, healthy, and rational amuſements take place of drinking, gaming, and debauchery. There are no towns ſufficiently large to have any prejudicial effects on the human conſtitution. The greater part of the happy inhabitants of this terreſtrial Paradiſe

[a] Polit. Juſtice. b. viii, c. ix, p. 510.

live

live in hamlets and farm houſes ſcattered over the face of the country. All men are equal. The labours of luxury are at an end; and the neceſſary labours of agriculture are ſhared amicably among all. The number of perſons and the produce of the iſland we ſuppoſe to be the ſame as at preſent. The ſpirit of benevolence, guided by impartial juſtice, will divide this produce among all the members of ſociety according to their wants. Though it would be impoſſible, that they ſhould all have animal food every day, yet vegetable food, with meat occaſionally, would ſatisfy the deſires of a frugal people, and would be ſufficient to preſerve them in health, ſtrength, and ſpirits.

Mr. Godwin conſiders marriage as a fraud and a monopoly.[a] Let us ſuppoſe the commerce of the ſexes eſtabliſhed upon principles of the moſt perfect freedom. Mr. Godwin does not think himſelf, that this freedom would lead to a promiſcuous intercourſe; and in this I perfectly agree with him. The love of variety is a vicious, corrupt, and unnatural taſte, and could not prevail in any great degree in a ſimple and virtuous ſtate of ſociety. Each man would probably ſelect for himſelf a partner, to whom he

[a] Polit. Juſtice, b. viii, c. viii, p. 498 et ſeq.

would

would adhere, as long as that adherence continued to be the choice of both parties. It would be of little conſequence, according to Mr. Godwin, how many children a woman had, or to whom they belonged. Proviſions and aſſiſtance would ſpontaneouſly flow from the quarter in which they abounded to the quarter in which they were deficient.[a] And every man according to his capacity would be ready to furniſh inſtruction to the riſing generation.

I cannot conceive a form of ſociety ſo favourable upon the whole to population. The irremediableneſs of marriage, as it is at preſent conſtituted, undoubtedly deters many from entering into this ſtate. An unſhackled intercourſe on the contrary would be a moſt powerful incitement to early attachments; and as we are ſuppoſing no anxiety about the future ſupport of children to exiſt, I do not conceive, that there would be one woman in a hundred, of twenty-three years of age, without a family.

With theſe extraordinary encouragements to population, and every cauſe of depopulation, as we have ſuppoſed, removed, the numbers would neceſſarily increaſe faſter than in any ſociety that has ever yet been known. I have before mentioned, that the inhabitants of

[a] Political Juſtice, b. viii, c. viii, p. 504.

the

the back ſettlements of America appear to double their numbers in fifteen years. England is certainly a more healthy country than the back ſettlements of America; and as we have ſuppoſed every houſe in the iſland to be airy and wholeſome, and the encouragements to have a family greater even than in America, no probable reaſon can be aſſigned, why the population ſhould not double itſelf in leſs, if poſſible, than fifteen years. But to be quite ſure, that we do not go beyond the truth, we will only ſuppoſe the period of doubling to be twenty-five years; a ratio of increaſe, which is ſlower than is known to have taken place throughout all the northern ſtates of America.

There can be little doubt, that the equalization of property which we have ſuppoſed, added to the circumſtance of the labour of the whole community being directed chiefly to agriculture, would tend greatly to augment the produce of the country. But to anſwer the demands of a population increaſing ſo rapidly, Mr. Godwin's calculation of half an hour a day would certainly not be ſufficient. It is probable, that the half of every man's time muſt be employed for this purpoſe. Yet with ſuch or much greater exertions, a perſon who is acquainted with the nature of the ſoil in this country, and who

who reflects on the fertility of the lands already in cultivation, and the barrenneſs of thoſe that are not cultivated, will be very much diſpoſed to doubt, whether the whole average produce could poſſibly be doubled in twenty-five years from the preſent period. The only chance of ſucceſs would be from the ploughing up moſt of the grazing countries, and putting an end almoſt entirely to animal food. Yet this ſcheme would probably defeat itſelf. The ſoil of England will not produce much without dreſſing; and cattle ſeem to be neceſſary to make that ſpecies of manure, which beſt ſuits the land.

Difficult however as it might be to double the average produce of the iſland in twenty-five years, let us ſuppoſe it effected. At the expiration of the firſt period therefore, the food, though almoſt entirely vegetable, would be ſufficient to ſupport in health the doubled population of 22 millions.

During the next period where will the food be found, to ſatisfy the importunate demands of the increaſing numbers? Where is the freſh land to turn up? Where is the dreſſing neceſſary to improve that which is already in cultivation? There is no perſon with the ſmalleſt knowledge of land but would ſay, that it was impoſſible, that

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that the average produce of the country could be increaſed during the ſecond twenty-five years by a quantity equal to what it at preſent yields. Yet we will ſuppoſe this increaſe, however improbable, to take place. The exuberant ſtrength of the argument allows of almoſt any conceſſion. Even with this conceſſion however, there would be eleven millions at the expiration of the ſecond term unprovided for. A quantity equal to the frugal ſupport of 33 millions would be to be divided among 44 millions.

Alas! what becomes of the picture, where men lived in the midſt of plenty, where no man was obliged to provide with anxiety and pain for his reſtleſs wants; where the narrow principle of ſelfiſhneſs did not exiſt; where the mind was delivered from her perpetual anxiety about corporal ſupport, and free to expatiate in the field of thought which is congenial to her? This beautiful fabric of the imagination vaniſhes at the ſevere touch of truth. The ſpirit of benevolence, cheriſhed and invigorated by plenty, is repreſſed by the chilling breath of want. The hateful paſſions that had vaniſhed reappear. The mighty law of ſelf-preſervation expels all the ſofter and more exalted emotions of the ſoul. The temptations to evil are too ſtrong

strong for human nature to resist. The corn is plucked up before it is ripe, or secreted in unfair proportions; and the whole black train of vices that belong to falsehood are immediately generated. Provisions no longer flow in for the support of a mother with a large family. The children are sickly from insufficient food. The rosy flush of health gives place to the pallid cheek and hollow eye of misery. Benevolence, yet lingering in a few bosoms, makes some faint expiring struggles, till at length self-love resumes his wonted empire, and lords it triumphant over the world.

No human institutions here existed, to the perverseness of which Mr. Godwin ascribes the original sin of the worst men.[a] No opposition had been produced by them between public and private good. No monopoly had been created of those advantages, which reason directs to be left in common. No man had been goaded to the breach of order by unjust laws. Benevolence had established her reign in all hearts. And yet in so short a period as fifty years, violence, oppression, falsehood, misery, every hateful vice, and every form of distress, which degrade and sadden the present state of society,

[a] Polit. Justice, b. viii, c. iii, p. 340.

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seem to have been generated by the most imperious circumstances, by laws inherent in the nature of man, and absolutely independent of all human regulations.

If we be not yet too well convinced of the reality of this melancholy picture, let us but look for a moment into the next period of twenty-five years, and we shall see 44 millions of human beings without the means of support; and at the conclusion of the first century the population would be 176 millions, and the food only sufficient for 55 millions, leaving 121 millions unprovided for. In these ages want indeed would be triumphant, and rapine and murder must reign at large: and yet all this time we are supposing the produce of the earth absolutely unlimited, and the yearly increase greater than the boldest speculator can imagine.

This is undoubtedly a very different view of the difficulty arising from the principle of population from that which Mr. Godwin gives, when he says, "Myriads of centuries of still "increasing population may pass away, and the "earth be still found sufficient for the subsist-"ence of its inhabitants."

I am sufficiently aware, that the redundant millions which I have mentioned could never have

have exiſted. It is a perfectly juſt obſervation of Mr Godwin, that "there is a principle in "human ſociety, by which population is per-"petually kept down to the level of the means "of ſubſiſtence." The ſole queſtion is, what is this principle? Is it ſome obſcure and occult cauſe? Is it ſome myſterious interference of Heaven, which at a certain period ſtrikes the men with impotence, and the women with barrenneſs? Or is it a cauſe open to our reſearches, within our view; a cauſe which has conſtantly been obſerved to operate, though with varied force, in every ſtate in which man has been placed? Is it not miſery, and the fear of miſery, the neceſſary and inevitable reſults of the laws of nature, which human inſtitutions, ſo far from aggravating, have tended conſiderably to mitigate, though they can never remove?

It may be curious to obſerve in the caſe that we have been ſuppoſing, how ſome of the principal laws, which at preſent govern civilized ſociety, would be ſucceſſively dictated by the moſt imperious neceſſity. As man, according to Mr. Godwin, is the creature of the impreſſions to which he is ſubject, the goadings of want could not continue long, before ſome violations of public or private ſtock would neceſſarily take

place. As these violations increased in number and extent, the more active and comprehensive intellects of the society would soon perceive, that, while the population was fast increasing, the yearly produce of the country would shortly begin to diminish. The urgency of the case would suggest the necessity of some immediate measures being taken for the general safety. Some kind of convention would be then called, and the dangerous situation of the country stated in the strongest terms. It would be observed, that while they lived in the midst of plenty it was of little consequence who laboured the least, or who possessed the least, as every man was perfectly willing and ready to supply the wants of his neighbour. But that the question was no longer whether one man should give to another that which he did not use himself; but whether he should give to his neighbour the food which was absolutely necessary to his own existence. It would be represented, that the number of those who were in want very greatly exceeded the number and means of those who should supply them; that these pressing wants, which, from the state of the produce of the country, could not all be gratified, had occasioned some flagrant violations of justice; that

that these violations had already checked the increase of food, and would, if they were not by some means or other prevented, throw the whole community into confusion; that imperious necessity seemed to dictate, that a yearly increase of produce should, if possible, be obtained at all events; that, in order to effect this first great and indispensable purpose, it would be advisable to make a more complete division of land, and to secure every man's property against violation by the most powerful sanctions.

It might be urged perhaps, by some objectors, that as the fertility of the land increased, and various accidents occurred, the shares of some men might be much more than sufficient for their support; and that when the reign of self-love was once established, they would not distribute their surplus produce without some compensation in return. It would be observed in answer, that this was an inconvenience greatly to be lamented; but that it was an evil which would bear no comparison to the black train of distresses inevitably occasioned by the insecurity of property; that the quantity of food, which one man could consume, was necessarily limited by the narrow capacity of the human stomach; that it was certainly not probable, that he should

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throw away the reſt; and if he exchanged his ſurplus produce for the labour of others, this would be better than that theſe others ſhould abſolutely ſtarve.

It ſeems highly probable therefore, that an adminiſtration of property, not very different from that which prevails in civilized ſtates at preſent, would be eſtabliſhed as the beſt though inadequate remedy for the evils, which were preſſing on the ſociety.

The next ſubject which would come under diſcuſſion, intimately connected with the preceding, is the commerce of the ſexes. It would be urged by thoſe who had turned their attention to the true cauſe of the difficulties under which the community laboured, that, while every man felt ſecure, that all his children would be well provided for by general benevolence, the powers of the earth would be abſolutely inadequate to produce food for the population which would enſue; that, even if the whole attention and labour of the ſociety were directed to this ſole point, and if by the moſt perfect ſecurity of property, and every other encouragement that could be thought of, the greateſt poſſible increaſe of produce were yearly obtained, yet ſtill the increaſe of food would by no means keep pace with

with the much more rapid increaſe of population; that ſome check to population therefore was imperiouſly called for; that the moſt natural and obvious check ſeemed to be, to make every man provide for his own children; that this would operate in ſome reſpect as a meaſure and a guide in the increaſe of population, as it might be expected, that no man would bring beings into the world for whom he could not find the means of ſupport; that, where this notwithſtanding was the caſe, it ſeemed neceſſary for the example of others, that the diſgrace and inconvenience attending ſuch a conduct ſhould fall upon that individual, who had thus inconſiderately plunged himſelf and his innocent children into want and miſery.

The inſtitution of marriage, or at leaſt of ſome expreſs or implied obligation on every man to ſupport his own children, ſeems to be the natural reſult of theſe reaſonings in a community under the difficulties that we have ſuppoſed.

The view of theſe difficulties preſents us with a very natural reaſon, why the diſgrace which attends a breach of chaſtity ſhould be greater in a woman than in a man. It could not be expected, that women ſhould have re-

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ſources ſufficient to ſupport their own children. When, therefore, a woman had lived with a man, who had entered into no compact to maintain her children; and, aware of the inconveniences that he might bring upon himſelf, had deſerted her, theſe children muſt neceſſarily fall upon the ſociety for ſupport or ſtarve. And to prevent the frequent recurrence of ſuch an inconvenience, as it would be highly unjuſt to puniſh ſo natural a fault by perſonal reſtraint or infliction, the men might agree to puniſh it with diſgrace. The offence is beſides more obvious and conſpicuous in the woman, and leſs liable to any miſtake. The father of a child may not always be known; but the ſame uncertainty cannot eaſily exiſt with regard to the mother. Where the evidence of the offence was moſt complete, and the inconvenience to the ſociety, at the ſame time, the greateſt, there, it was agreed, that the largeſt ſhare of blame ſhould fall. The obligation on every man to ſupport his children the ſociety would enforce by poſitive laws; and the greater degree of inconvenience or labour, to which a family would neceſſarily ſubject him, added to ſome portion of diſgrace, which every human being muſt incur who leads another into unhappi-

unhappineſs, might be conſidered as a ſufficient puniſhment for the man.

That a woman ſhould at preſent be almoſt driven from ſociety for an offence, which men commit nearly with impunity, ſeems to be undoubtedly a breach of natural juſtice. But the origin of the cuſtom, as the moſt obvious and effectual method of preventing the frequent recurrence of a ſerious inconvenience to a community, appears to be natural, though not perhaps perfectly juſtifiable. This origin however is now loſt in the new train of ideas, that the cuſtom has ſince generated. What at firſt might be dictated by ſtate neceſſity is now ſupported by female delicacy; and operates with the greateſt force on that part of the ſociety, where, if the original intention of the cuſtom were preſerved, there is the leaſt real occaſion for it.

When theſe two fundamental laws of ſociety, the ſecurity of property, and the inſtitution of marriage, were once eſtabliſhed, inequality of conditions muſt neceſſarily follow. Thoſe who were born after the diviſion of property would come into a world already poſſeſſed. If their parents, from having too large a family, were unable to give them ſufficient for their ſupport, what could they do in a world where every thing

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was appropriated? We have seen the fatal effects that would result to society, if every man had a valid claim to an equal share of the produce of the earth. The members of a family, which was grown too large for the original division of land appropriated to it, could not then demand a part of the surplus produce of others as a debt of justice. It has appeared, that from the inevitable laws of human nature some human beings will be exposed to want. These are the unhappy persons, who in the great lottery of life have drawn a blank. The number of these persons would soon exceed the ability of the surplus produce to supply. Moral merit is a very difficult criterion except in extreme cases. The owners of surplus produce would in general seek some more obvious mark of distinction; and it seems to be both natural and just, that, except upon particular occasions, their choice should fall upon those who were able, and professed themselves willing, to exert their strength in procuring a further surplus produce, which would at once benefit the community, and enable the proprietors to afford assistance to greater numbers. All who were in want of food would be urged by imperious necessity, to offer their labour in exchange for this article,

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so absolutely necessary to existence. The fund appropriated to the maintenance of labour would be the aggregate quantity of food possessed by the owners of land beyond their own consumption. When the demands upon this fund were great and numerous it would naturally be divided into very small shares. Labour would be ill paid. Men would offer to work for a bare subsistence; and the rearing of families would be checked by sickness and misery. On the contrary, when this fund was increasing fast; when it was great in proportion to the number of claimants, it would be divided in much larger shares. No man would exchange his labour without receiving an ample quantity of food in return. Labourers would live in ease and comfort, and would consquently be able to rear a numerous and vigorous offspring.

On the state of this fund, the happiness or the degree of misery, prevailing among the lower classes of people in every known state, at present, chiefly depends; and on this happiness or degree of misory, depends principally the increase, stationariness, or decrease of population.

And thus it appears, that a society constituted according to the most beautiful form that imagination can conceive, with benevolence for its moving

moving principle instead of self-love, and with every evil disposition in all its members corrected by reason, not force, would from the inevitable laws of nature, and not from any original depravity of man, or of human institutions, degenerate in a very short period into a society constructed upon a plan not essentially different from that which prevails in every known state at present; a society, divided into a class of proprietors and a class of labourers, and with self-love for the mainspring of the great machine.

In the supposition which I have made, I have undoubtedly taken the increase of population smaller, and the increase of produce greater, than they really would be. No reason can be assigned, why, under the circumstances supposed, population should not increase faster than in any known instance. If then we were to take the period of doubling at fifteen years instead of twenty-five years, and reflect upon the labour necessary to double the produce in so short a time, even if we allow it possible; we may venture to pronounce with certainty, that, if Mr. Godwin's system of society were established in its utmost perfection, instead of myriads of centuries, not thirty years could elapse before its

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utter deſtruction from the ſimple principle of population.

I have taken no notice of emigration in this place, for obvious reaſons. If ſuch ſocieties were inſtituted in other parts of Europe, theſe countries would be under the ſame difficulties with regard to population, and could admit no freſh members into their boſoms. If this beautiful ſociety were confined to our iſland, it muſt have degenerated ſtrangely from its original purity, and adminiſter but a very ſmall portion of the happineſs it propoſed, before any of its members would voluntarily conſent to leave it, and live under ſuch governments as at preſent exiſt in Europe, or ſubmit to the extreme hardſhips of firſt ſettlers in new regions.

CHAP. III.

Observations on the Reply of Mr. Godwin.

Mr. Godwin in a late publication has replied to those parts of the Essay on the Principle of Population, which he thinks bear the hardest on his system. A few remarks on this reply will be sufficient.

In a note to an early part of his pamphlet he observes, that the main attack of the essay is not directed against the principles of his work, but its conclusion.[a] It may be true indeed, that, as Mr. Godwin had dedicated one particular chapter towards the conclusion of his work to the consideration of the objections to his system from the principle of population, this particular chapter is most frequently alluded to: but certainly, if the great principle of the essay be admitted, it affects his whole work, and essentially alters the foundations of political justice. A

[a] Reply to the attacks of Dr. Parr, Mr. Mackintosh, the author of an Essay on Population, and others, p. 10.

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great part of Mr. Godwin's book conſiſts of an abuſe of human inſtitutions, as productive of all or moſt of the evils which afflict ſociety. The acknowledgment of a new and totally unconſidered cauſe of miſery would evidently alter the ſtate of theſe arguments, and make it abſolutely neceſſary, that they ſhould be either newly modified or entirely rejected.

In the firſt book of Political Juſtice, chap. iii, entitled, "The Spirit of Political Inſtitutions," Mr. Godwin obſerves, that "Two of the greateſt "abuſes relative to the interior policy of nations, "which at this time prevail in the world, con- "ſiſt in the irregular transfer of property, either "firſt by violence, or ſecondly by fraud." And he goes on to ſay, that, if there exiſted no deſire in individuals to poſſeſs themſelves of the ſubſtance of others, and if every man could with perfect facility obtain the neceſſaries of life, civil ſociety might become what poetry has feigned of the golden age. Let us inquire, he ſays, into the principles to which theſe evils are indebted for exiſtence. After acknowledging the truth of the principal argument in the eſſay on population, I do not think, that he could ſtop in this inquiry at mere human inſtitutions. Many other

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other parts of his work would be affected by this consideration in a similar manner.

As Mr. Godwin seems disposed to understand, and candidly to admit the truth of the principal argument in the essay, I feel the more mortified, that he should think it a fair inference from my positions, that the political superintendents of a community are bound to exercise a paternal vigilance and care over the two great means of advantage and safety to mankind, misery and vice; and that no evil is more to be dreaded, than that we should have too little of them in the world, to confine the principle of population within its proper sphere.[a] I am at a loss to conceive, what class of evils Mr. Godwin imagines is yet behind, which these salutary checks are to prevent. For my own part I know of no greater evils than vice and misery; and the sole question is respecting the most effectual mode of diminishing them. The only reason why I object to Mr. Godwin's system is my full conviction, that an attempt to execute it would very greatly increase the quantity of vice and misery in society. If Mr. Godwin will undo this conviction, and prove to me, though it be only in theory, provided that

[a] Reply, &c. p. 60.

theory

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theory be conſiſtent and founded on a knowledge of human nature, that his ſyſtem will really tend to drive vice and miſery from the earth, he may depend upon having me one of its ſteadieſt and warmeſt advocates.

Mr. Godwin obſerves, that he ſhould naturally be diſpoſed to pronounce that man ſtrangely indifferent to ſchemes of extraordinary improvement in ſociety, who made it a concluſive argument againſt them, that, when they were realized, they might peradventure be of no permanence and duration. And yet, what is morality individual or political, according to Mr. Godwin's own definition of it, but a calculation of conſequences? Is the phyſician the patron of pain, who adviſes his patient to bear a preſent evil, rather than betake himſelf to a remedy, which, though it might give momentary relief, would afterwards greatly aggravate all the ſymptoms? Is the moraliſt to be called an enemy to pleaſure, becauſe he recommends to a young man juſt entering into life not to ruin his health and patrimony in a few years by an exceſs of preſent gratifications, but to economize his enjoyments, that he may ſpread them over a longer period? Of Mr. Godwin's ſyſtem, according to the preſent arguments by which it

is ſupported, it is not enough to ſay, *peradventure* it will be of no permanence; but we can pronounce with *certainty*, that it will be of no permanence: and under ſuch circumſtances an attempt to execute it would unqueſtionably be a great political immorality.

Mr. Godwin obſerves, that, after recovering from the firſt impreſſion made by the Eſſay on Population, the firſt thing that is apt to ſtrike every reflecting mind is, that the exceſs of power in the principle of population over the principle of ſubſiſtence has never, in any paſt inſtance, in any quarter or age of the world, produced thoſe great and aſtoniſhing effects, that total breaking up of all the ſtructures and maxims of ſociety, which the eſſay leads us to expect from it in certain caſes in future.[a] This is undoubtedly true; and the reaſon is, that in no paſt inſtance, nor in any quarter or age of the world, has an attempt been made to eſtabliſh ſuch a ſyſtem as Mr. Godwin's; and without an attempt of this nature none of theſe great effects will follow. The convulſions of the ſocial ſyſtem, deſcribed in the laſt chapter, appeared by a kind of irreſiſtible neceſſity, to terminate in the eſtabliſhment of the laws of property and

[a] Reply, p. 70.

marriage;

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marriage; but in countries where these laws are already established, as they are in all the common constitutions of society with which we are acquainted, the operation of the principle of population will always be silent and gradual, and not different to what we daily see in our own country. Other persons beside Mr. Godwin have imagined, that I looked to certain periods in future, when population would exceed the means of subsistence in a much greater degree than at present, and that the evils arising from the principle of population were rather in contemplation than in existence; but this is a total misconception of the argument.[a] Poverty, and not absolute famine, is the specific effect of the principle of population, as I have before endeavoured to show. Many countries are now suffering all the evils, that can ever be expected to flow from this principle; and even if we were arrived at the absolute limit to all further increase of produce, a point which we shall certainly never reach, I should by no means expect, that these evils would be in any marked manner aggravated. The increase of produce in most European countries is so very slow com-

[a] In other parts of his Reply, Mr. Godwin does not fall into this error.

pared with what would be required to ſupport an unreſtricted increaſe of people, that the checks, which are conſtantly in action to repreſs the population to the level of a produce increaſing ſo ſlowly, would have very little more to do in wearing it down to a produce abſolutely ſtationary.

But Mr. Godwin ſays, that, if he looks into the paſt hiſtory of the world, he does not ſee, that increaſing population has been controlled and confined by vice and miſery alone. In this obſervation I cannot agree with him. I believe Mr. Godwin would find it difficult to name any check, which in paſt ages has contributed to keep down the population to the level of the means of ſubſiſtence, that does not fairly come under ſome form of vice or miſery; except indeed the check of moral reſtraint, which I have already inſiſted on; and which, to ſay the truth, whatever hopes we may entertain of its prevalence in future, has undoubtedly in paſt ages operated with inconſiderable force.[a]

[a] It ſhould be recollected always, that by moral reſtraint I mean a reſtraint from marriage from prudential motives, which is not followed by irregular gratifications. In this ſenſe I am inclined to believe, that the expreſſion I have here uſed is not too ſtrong.

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I do not think, that I ſhould find it difficult to juſtify myſelf in the eyes of my readers from the imputation of being the patron of vice and miſery; but I am not clear, that Mr. Godwin would find ſuch a juſtification ſo eaſy. For though he has poſitively declared, that he does not "regard them with complacency;" and "hopes that it may not be conſidered as a taſte "abſolutely ſingular in him, that he ſhould entertain no vehement partialities for vice and "miſery;"[a] yet he has certainly expoſed himſelf to the ſuſpicion of having this ſingular taſte, by ſuggeſting the organization of a very large portion of them for the benefit of ſociety in general. On this ſubject I need only obſerve, that I have always ranked the two checks,[b] which he firſt

[a] Reply, p. 76.

[b] Mr Godwin does not acknowledge the juſtice of Hume's obſervation reſpecting infanticide; and yet the extreme population and poverty in China, where this cuſtom prevails, tends ſtrongly to confirm the obſervation. It is ſtill however true, as Mr. Godwin obſerves, that the expedient is, in its own nature, adequate to the end for which it was cited (p. 66); but to make it ſo in fact, it muſt be done by the magiſtrate, and not left to the parents. The almoſt invariable tendency of this cuſtom to increaſe population, when it depends entirely on the parents, ſhows the extreme pain which they muſt feel in making ſuch a ſacrifice, even when the diſtreſs

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firſt mentions, among the worſt forms of vice and miſery.

In one part of his Reply, Mr. Godwin makes a ſuppoſition reſpecting the number of children that might be allowed to each prolific marriage; but as he has not entered into the detail of the mode by which a greater number might be prevented, I ſhall not notice it further than merely to obſerve, that although he profeſſes to acknowledge the geometrical and arithmetical ratios of population and food, yet in this place he appears to think, that, practically applied, theſe different ratios of increaſe are not of a nature to make the evil reſulting from them urgent, or alarmingly to confine the natural progreſs of population.[a] This obſervation ſeems to contradict his former acknowledgement.

ariſing from exceſſive poverty may be ſuppoſed to have deadened in great meaſure their ſenſibility. What muſt this pain be then upon the ſuppoſition of the interference of a magiſtrate, or of a poſitive law, to make parents deſtroy a child, which they feel the deſire and think they poſſeſs the power of ſupporting? The permiſſion of infanticide is bad enough, and cannot but have a bad effect on the moral ſenſibility of a nation; but I cannot conceive any thing much more deteſtable or ſhocking to the feelings than any direct regulation of this kind, although ſanctioned by the names of Plato and Ariſtotle.

[a] Reply, p. 70.

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The laſt check which Mr. Godwin mentions, and which I am perſuaded is the only one which he would ſeriouſly recommend is, "that ſenti-"ment, whether virtue, prudence, or pride, "which continually reſtrains the univerſality "and frequent repetition of the marriage con-"tract."[a] On this ſentiment, which I have already noticed, it will appear, that in the ſequel of this work I ſhall lay conſiderable ſtreſs. Of this check therefore itſelf I entirely approve; but I do not think, that Mr. Godwin's ſyſtem of political juſtice is by any means favourable to its prevalence. The tendency to early marriages is ſo ſtrong, that we want every poſſible help that we can get to counteract it; and a ſyſtem which in any way whatever tends to weaken the foundation of private property, and to leſſen in any degree the full advantage and ſuperiority which each individual may derive from his prudence, muſt remove the only counteracting weight to the paſſion of love, that can be depended upon for any eſſential effect. Mr. Godwin acknowledges, that in his ſyſtem "the ill "conſequences of a numerous family will not "come ſo coarſely home to each man's indi-"vidual intereſt, as they do at preſent."[b] But

[a] Reply, p. 72. [b] Id. p. 74.

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I am ſorry to ſay, that, from what we know hitherto of the human character, we can have no rational hopes of ſucceſs without this coarſe application to individual intereſt, which Mr. Godwin rejects. If the whole effect were to depend merely on a ſenſe of duty, conſidering the powerful antagoniſt that is to be contended with in the preſent caſe, I confeſs that I ſhould abſolutely deſpair. At the ſame time I am ſtrongly of opinion, that a ſenſe of duty, ſuperadded to a ſenſe of intereſt, would by no means be without its effect. There are many noble and diſintereſted ſpirits, who, though aware of the inconveniencies, which they may bring upon themſelves by the indulgence of an early and virtuous paſſion, feel a kind of repugnance to liſten to the dictates of mere worldly prudence, and a pride in rejecting theſe low conſiderations. There is a kind of romantic gallantry in ſacrificing all for love, naturally faſcinating to a young mind; and to ſay the truth, if all is to be ſacrificed, I do not know in what better cauſe it can be done. But if a ſtrong ſenſe of duty could in theſe inſtances be added to prudential ſuggeſtions, the whole queſtion might wear a different colour. In delaying the gratification of paſſion from a ſenſe of duty, the moſt diſintereſted

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tereſted ſpirit, the moſt delicate honour, might be ſatisfied. The romantic pride might take a different direction, and the dictates of worldly prudence might be followed with the cheerful conſciouſneſs of making a virtuous ſacrifice.

If we were to remove or weaken the motive of intereſt, which would be the caſe in Mr. Godwin's ſyſtem, I fear we ſhould have but a weak ſubſtitute in a ſenſe of duty. But if to the preſent beneficial effects known to reſult from a ſenſe of intereſt, we could ſuperadd a ſenſe of duty, which is the object of the latter part of this work, it does not ſeem abſolutely hopeleſs, that ſome partial improvement in ſociety ſhould reſult from it.

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CHAP. IV.

Of Emigration.

ALTHOUGH the reſource of emigration ſeems to be excluded from ſuch a ſociety as Mr. Godwin has imagined; yet in that partial degree of improvement, which alone can rationally be expected, it may fairly enter into our conſideration. And as it is not probable, that human induſtry ſhould begin to receive its beſt direction throughout all the nations of the earth at the ſame time, it may be ſaid, that in the caſe of a redundant population in the more cultivated parts of the world, the natural and obvious remedy that preſents itſelf is, emigration to thoſe parts that are uncultivated. As theſe parts are of great extent, and very thinly peopled, this reſource might appear, on a firſt view of the ſubject, an adequate remedy, or at leaſt of a nature to remove the evil to a diſtant period: but when we advert to experience, and to the actual ſtate of the uncivilized parts of the globe, inſtead of

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any thing like an adequate remedy, it will appear but a ſlight palliative.

In the accounts which we have of the peopling of new countries, the dangers, difficulties, and hardſhips, with which the firſt ſettlers have had to ſtruggle, appear to be even greater, than we can well imagine they could be expoſed to in their parent ſtate. The endeavour to avoid that degree of unhappineſs ariſing from the difficulty of ſupporting a family might long have left the new world of America unpeopled by Europeans, if thoſe more powerful paſſions, the thirſt of gain, the ſpirit of adventure, and religious enthuſiaſm, had not directed and animated the enterpriſe. Theſe paſſions enabled the firſt adventurers to triumph over every obſtacle; but in many inſtances in a way to make humanity ſhudder, and to defeat the true end of emigration. Whatever may be the character of the Spaniſh inhabitants of Mexico and Peru at the preſent moment, we cannot read the accounts of the firſt conqueſts of theſe countries, without feeling ſtrongly, that the race deſtroyed was in moral worth as well as numbers ſuperior to the race of their deſtroyers.

The parts of America ſettled by the Engliſh, from being thinly peopled, were better adapted

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to the eſtabliſhment of new colonies; yet even here, the moſt formidable difficulties preſented themſelves. In the ſettlement of Virginia, begun by Sir Walter Raleigh, and eſtabliſhed by Lord Delaware, three attempts completely failed. Nearly half of the firſt colony was deſtroyed by the ſavages, and the reſt, conſumed and worn down by fatigue and famine, deſerted the country, and returned home in deſpair. The ſecond colony was cut off to a man in a manner unknown; but they were ſuppoſed to be deſtroyed by the Indians. The third experienced the ſame diſmal fate; and the remains of the fourth, after it had been reduced by famine and diſeaſe in the courſe of ſix months from 500 to 60 perſons, were returning in a famiſhing and deſperate condition to England, when they were met in the mouth of the Cheſapeak bay by Lord Delaware, with a ſquadron loaded with proviſions, and every thing for their relief and defence.[a]

The firſt puritan ſettlers in New England were few in number. They landed in a bad ſeaſon, and were only ſupported by their private funds. The winter was premature and terribly

[a] Burke's America, vol. ii, p. 219. Robertſon, b. ix. p. 83, 86.

cold;

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cold; the country was covered with wood, and afforded very little for the refreſhment of perſons ſickly with ſuch a voyage, or for the ſuſtenance of an infant people. Nearly half of them periſhed by the ſcurvy, by want, and the ſeverity of the climate; yet thoſe who ſurvived were not diſpirited by their hardſhips, but, ſupported by their energy of character, and the ſatisfaction of finding themſelves out of the reach of the ſpiritual arm, reduced this ſavage country by degrees to yield a comfortable ſubſiſtence.[a]

Even the plantation of Barbadoes, which increaſed afterwards with ſuch extraordinary rapidity, had at firſt to contend with a country utterly deſolate, an extreme want of proviſions, a difficulty in clearing the ground unuſually great from the uncommon ſize and hardneſs of the trees, a moſt diſheartening ſcantineſs and poverty in their firſt crops, and a ſlow and precarious ſupply of proviſions from England.[b]

The attempt of the French in 1663, to form at once a powerful colony in Guiana, was attended with the moſt diſaſtrous conſequences. Twelve thouſand men were landed in the rainy ſeaſon, and placed under tents and miſerable ſheds. In this ſituation, inactive, weary of ex-

[a] Burke's America, vol. ii, p. 144. [b] Id. p. 85.

iſtence,

iſtence, and in want of all neceſſaries; expoſed to contagious diſtempers, which are always occaſioned by bad proviſions, and to all the irregularities, which idleneſs produces among the lower claſſes of ſociety; almoſt the whole of them ended their lives in all the horrors of deſpair. The attempt was completely abortive. Two thouſand men, whoſe robuſt conſtitutions had enabled them to reſiſt the inclemency of the climate, and the miſeries to which they had been expoſed, were brought back to France, and the 26,000,000 of livres, which had been expended in the expedition, were totally loſt.[a]

In the late ſettlements at Port Jackſon in New Holland, a melancholy and affecting picture is drawn by Collins of the extreme hardſhips, with which, for ſome years, the infant colony had to ſtruggle, before the produce was equal to its ſupport. Theſe diſtreſſes were undoubtedly aggravated by the character of the ſettlers; but thoſe which were cauſed by the unhealthineſs of a newly cleared country, the failure of firſt crops, and the uncertainty of ſupplies from ſo diſtant a mother country, were of themſelves ſufficiently dis-

[a] Raynal, Hiſt. des Indes, tom. vii, liv, xiii, p. 43. 10 vols. 8vo. 1795.

heartening,

heartening, to place in a ſtrong point of view the neceſſity of great reſources, as well as unconquerable perſeverance, in the colonization of ſavage countries.

The eſtabliſhment of colonies in the more thinly peopled regions of Europe and Aſia would evidently require ſtill greater reſources. From the power and warlike character of the inhabitants of theſe countries, a conſiderable military force would be neceſſary, to prevent their utter and immediate deſtruction. Even the frontier provinces of the moſt powerful ſtates are defended with conſiderable difficulty from ſuch reſtleſs neighbours; and the peaceful labours of the cultivator are continually interrupted by their predatory incurſions. The late Empreſs Catharine of Ruſſia found it neceſſary, to protect by regular fortreſſes the colonies, which ſhe had eſtabliſhed in the diſtricts near the Wolga; and the calamities which her ſubjects ſuffered by the incurſions of the Crim Tartars furniſhed a pretext, and perhaps a juſt one, for taking poſſeſſion of the whole of the Crimea, and expelling the greateſt part of theſe turbulent neighbours, and reducing the reſt to a more tranquil mode of life.

The difficulties attending a firſt eſtabliſhment from

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from ſoil, climate, and the want of proper conveniences, are of courſe nearly the ſame in theſe regions as in America. Mr. Eton, in his account of the Turkiſh Empire, ſays, that 75,000 Chriſtians were obliged by Ruſſia to emigrate from the Crimea, and ſent to inhabit the country abandoned by the Nogai Tartars; but the winter coming on before the houſes built for them were ready, a great part of them had no other ſhelter from the cold, than what was afforded them by holes dug in the ground, covered with what they could procure, and the greateſt part of them periſhed. Only ſeven thouſand remained a few years afterwards. Another colony from Italy to the banks of the Boryſthenes had, he ſays, no better fate, owing to the bad management of thoſe, who were commiſſioned to provide for them.

It is needleſs to add to theſe inſtances, as the accounts given of the difficulties experienced in new ſettlements are all nearly ſimilar. It has been juſtly obſerved by a correſpondent of Dr. Franklin, that one of the reaſons why we have ſeen ſo many fruitleſs attempts to ſettle colonies at an immenſe public and private expenſe by ſeveral of the powers of Europe is, that the moral and mechanical habits adapted to the mother

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mother country are frequently not ſo to the new-ſettled one, and to external events, many of which are unforeſeen; and that it is to be remarked, that none of the Engliſh colonies became any way conſiderable, till the neceſſary manners were born and grew up in the country. Pallas particularly notices the want of proper habits in the colonies eſtabliſhed by Ruſſia, as one of the cauſes why they did not increaſe ſo faſt as might have been expected.

In addition to this, it may be obſerved, that the firſt eſtabliſhment of a new colony generally preſents an inſtance of a country peopled conſiderably beyond its actual produce; and the natural conſequence ſeems to be, that this population, if not amply ſupplied by the mother country, ſhould at the commencement be diminiſhed to the level of the firſt ſcanty productions, and not begin permanently to increaſe, till the remaining numbers had ſo far cultivated the ſoil, as to make it yield a quantity of food more than ſufficient for their own ſupport; and which conſequently they could divide with a family. The frequent failures in the eſtabliſhment of new colonies tend ſtrongly to ſhow the order of precedence between food and population.

It muſt be acknowledged then, that the claſs of people, on whom the diſtreſs ariſing from a too rapidly increaſing population would principally fall, could not poſſibly begin a new colony in a diſtant country. From the nature of their ſituation, they muſt neceſſarily be deficient in thoſe reſources, which alone could enſure ſucceſs: and unleſs they could find leaders among the higher claſſes urged by the ſpirit of avarice or enterpriſe, or of religious or political diſcontent; or were furniſhed with means and ſupport by government; whatever degree of miſery they might ſuffer in their own country from the ſcarcity of ſubſiſtence, they would be abſolutely unable to take poſſeſſion of any of thoſe uncultivated regions, of which there is ſuch an extent on the earth.

When new colonies have been once ſecurely eſtabliſhed, the difficulty of emigration is indeed very conſiderably diminiſhed; yet, even then, ſome reſources are neceſſary to provide veſſels for the voyage, and ſupport and aſſiſtance till the emigrants can ſettle themſelves, and find employment in their adopted country. How far it is incumbent upon a government to furniſh theſe reſources may be a queſtion; but whatever be its duty in this particular, perhaps it

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it is too much to expect, that, except where any particular colonial advantages are propoſed, emigration ſhould be actively aſſiſted.

The neceſſary reſources for tranſport and maintenance are however frequently furniſhed by individuals or private companies. For many years before the American war, and for ſome few ſince, the facilities of emigration to this new world, and the probable advantages in view, were unuſually great; and it muſt be conſidered undoubtedly as a very happy circumſtance for any country, to have ſo comfortable an aſylum for its redundant population. But I would aſk whether, even during theſe periods, the diſtreſs among the common people in this country was little or nothing; and whether every man felt ſecure before he ventured on marriage, that, however large his family might be, he ſhould find no difficulty in ſupporting it without pariſh aſſiſtance. The anſwer, I fear, could not be in the affirmative.

It will be ſaid, that, when an opportunity of advantageous emigration is offered, it is the fault of the people themſelves, if inſtead of accepting it they prefer a life of celibacy or extreme poverty in their own country. Is it then a fault for a man to feel an attachment to his

native ſoil, to love the parents that nurtured him, his kindred, his friends, and the companions of his early years? or is it no evil that he ſuffers, becauſe he conſents to bear it rather than ſnap theſe cords, which nature has wound in cloſe and intricate folds round the human heart? The great plan of Providence ſeems to require, indeed, that theſe ties ſhould ſometimes be broken; but the ſeparation does not, on that account, give leſs pain; and though the general good may be promoted by it, it does not ceaſe to be an individual evil. Beſides, doubts and uncertainty muſt ever attend all diſtant emigrations, particularly in the apprehenſions of the lower claſſes of people. They cannot feel quite ſecure, that the repreſentations made to them of the high price of labour, or the cheapneſs of land, are accurately true. They are placing themſelves in the power of the perſons who are to furniſh them with the means of tranſport and maintenance, who may perhaps have an intereſt in deceiving them; and the ſea which they are to paſs appears to them like the ſeparation of death from all their former connexions, and in a manner to preclude the poſſibility of return in caſe of failure, as they cannot expect the offer of the ſame means to

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bring them back. We cannot be ſurpriſed then, that, except where a ſpirit of enterpriſe is added to the uneaſineſs of poverty, the conſideration of theſe circumſtances ſhould frequently

"Make them rather bear the ills they ſuffer,
"Than fly to others which they know not of."

If a tract of rich land as large as this iſland were ſuddenly annexed to it, and ſold in ſmall lots, or let out in ſmall farms, the caſe would be very different, and the melioration of the ſtate of the common people would be ſudden and ſtriking; though the rich would be continually complaining of the high price of labour, the pride of the lower claſſes, and the difficulty of getting work done. Theſe, I underſtand, are not unfrequent complaints among the men of property in America.

Every reſource however from emigration, if uſed effectually, as this would be, muſt be of ſhort duration. There is ſcarcely a ſtate in Europe, except perhaps Ruſſia, the inhabitants of which do not often endeavour to better their condition by removing to other countries. As theſe ſtates therefore have nearly all rather a redundant than deficient population, in proportion to their produce, they cannot be ſuppoſed to afford any effectual reſources of emigration to

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each other. Let us ſuppoſe for a moment, that in this more enlightened part of the globe, the internal economy of each ſtate were ſo admirably regulated, that no checks exiſted to population, and that the different governments provided every facility for emigration. Taking the population of Europe, excluding Ruſſia, at a hundred millions, and allowing a greater increaſe of produce than is probable, or even poſſible, in the mother countries, the redundancy of parent ſtock in a ſingle century would be eleven hundred millions, which, added to the natural increaſe of the colonies during the ſame time, would more than double what has been ſuppoſed to be the preſent population of the whole earth.

Can we imagine, that in the uncultivated parts of Aſia, Africa, or America, the greateſt exertions and the beſt directed endeavours could, in ſo ſhort a period, prepare a quantity of land ſufficient for the ſupport of ſuch a population? If any ſanguine perſon ſhould feel a doubt upon the ſubject, let him only add 25 or 50 years more, and every doubt muſt be cruſhed in overwhelming conviction.

It is evident therefore, that the reaſon why the reſource of emigration has ſo long continued

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to be held out as a remedy to redundant population is, becauſe, from the natural unwillingneſs of people to deſert their native country, and the difficulty of clearing and cultivating freſh ſoil, it never is or can be adequately adopted. If this remedy were indeed really effectual, and had power ſo far to relieve the diſorders of vice and miſery in old ſtates, as to place them in the condition of the moſt proſperous new colonies, we ſhould ſoon ſee the phial exhauſted; and when the diſorders returned with increaſed virulence, every hope from this quarter would be for ever cloſed.

It is clear therefore, that with any view of making room for an unreſtricted increaſe of population, emigration is perfectly inadequate; but as a partial and temporary expedient, and with a view to the more general cultivation of the earth, and the wider ſpread of civilization, it ſeems to be both uſeful and proper; and if it cannot be proved, that governments are bound actively to encourage it, it is not only ſtrikingly unjuſt, but in the higheſt degree impolitic in them to prevent it. There are no fears ſo totally ill-grounded as the fears of depopulation from emigration. The *vis inertiæ* of people in general, and their attachment to their homes,

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are qualities ſo ſtrong and general, that we may reſt aſſured, that they will not emigrate unleſs, from political diſcontents or extreme poverty, they are in ſuch a ſtate, as will make it as much for the advantage of their country as of themſelves, that they ſhould go out of it. The complaints of high wages in conſequence of emigrations are of all others the moſt unreaſonable, and ought the leaſt to be attended to. If the wages of labour in any country be ſuch as to enable the lower claſſes of people to live with tolerable comfort, we may be quite certain, that they will not emigrate; and if they be not ſuch, it is cruelty and injuſtice to detain them.

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CHAP. V.

Of Poor Laws.

To remedy the frequent diſtreſſes of the poor, laws to enforce their relief have been inſtituted; and in the eſtabliſhment of a general ſyſtem of this kind England has particularly diſtinguiſhed herſelf. But it is to be feared, that, though it may have alleviated a little the intenſity of individual misfortune, it has ſpread the evil over a much larger ſurface.

It is a ſubject often ſtarted in converſation, and mentioned always as a matter of great ſurpriſe, that, notwithſtanding the immenſe ſum which is annually collected for the poor in this country, there is ſtill ſo much diſtreſs among them. Some think that the money muſt be embezzled for private uſe; others, that the churchwardens and overſeers conſume the greateſt part of it in feaſting. All agree, that ſomehow or other it muſt be very ill managed. In ſhort, the fact, that even before the late ſcarcities three millions were collected annually for the

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the poor, and yet that their diſtreſſes were not removed, is the ſubject of continual aſtoniſhment. But a man who looks a little below the ſurface of things would be much more aſtoniſhed, if the fact were otherwiſe than it is obſerved to be; or even if a collection univerſally of eighteen ſhillings in the pound, inſtead of four, were materially to alter it.

Suppoſe, that by a ſubſcription of the rich the eighteen pence or two ſhillings, which men earn now, were made up five ſhillings: it might be imagined, perhaps, that they would then be able to live comfortably, and have a piece of meat every day for their dinner. But this would be a very falſe concluſion. The transfer of three additional ſhillings a day to each labourer would not increaſe the quantity of meat in the country. There is not at preſent enough for all to have a moderate ſhare. What would then be the conſequence? the competition among the buyers in the market of meat would rapidly raiſe the price from eight pence or nine pence to two or three ſhillings in the pound, and the commodity would not be divided among many more than it is at preſent. When an article is ſcarce, and cannot be diſtributed to all, he that can ſhow the moſt valid patent, that is, he that offers

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offers the moſt money, becomes the poſſeſſor. If we can ſuppoſe the competition among the buyers of meat to continue long enough for a greater number of cattle to be reared annually, this could only be done at the expenſe of the corn, which would be a very diſadvantageous exchange; for it is well known, that the country could not then ſupport the ſame population; and when ſubſiſtence is ſcarce in proportion to the number of people, it is of little conſequence, whether the loweſt members of the ſociety poſſeſs two ſhillings or five. They muſt, at all events, be reduced to live upon the hardeſt fare, and in the ſmalleſt quantity.

It might be ſaid, perhaps, that the increaſed number of purchaſers in every article would give a ſpur to productive induſtry, and that the whole produce of the iſland would be increaſed. But the ſpur that theſe fancied riches would give to population would more than counterbalance it; and the increaſed produce would be to be divided among a more than proportionably increaſed number of people.

A collection from the rich of eighteen ſhillings in the pound, even if diſtributed in the moſt judicious manner, would have an effect ſimilar to that reſulting from the ſuppoſition which

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which I have juſt made; and no poſſible ſacrifices of the rich, particularly in money, could for any time prevent the recurrence of diſtreſs among the lower members of ſociety, whoever they were. Great changes might indeed be made. The rich might become poor, and ſome of the poor rich: but while the preſent proportion between population and food continues, a part of the ſociety muſt neceſſarily find it difficult to ſupport a family, and this difficulty will naturally fall on the leaſt fortunate members.

It may at firſt appear ſtrange, but I believe it is true, that I cannot by means of money raiſe the condition of a poor man, and enable him to live much better than he did before, without proportionably depreſſing others in the ſame claſs. If I retrench the quantity of food conſumed in my houſe, and give him what I have cut off, I then benefit him without depreſſing any but myſelf and family, who perhaps may be well able to bear it. If I turn up a piece of uncultivated land, and give him the produce, I then benefit both him and all the members of ſociety, becauſe what he before conſumed is thrown into the common ſtock, and probably ſome of the new produce with it. But if I only give him money, ſuppoſing the produce of the

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the country to remain the ſame, I give him a title to a larger ſhare of that produce than formerly, which ſhare he cannot receive without diminiſhing the ſhares of others. It is evident, that this effect in individual inſtances muſt be ſo ſmall as to be totally imperceptible; but ſtill it muſt exiſt, as many other effects do, which like ſome of the inſects that people the air elude our groſſer perceptions.

Suppoſing the quantity of food in any country to remain the ſame for many years together, it is evident, that this food muſt be divided according to the value of each man's patent, or the ſum of money which he can afford to ſpend in this commodity ſo univerſally in requeſt. It is a demonſtrative truth, therefore, that the patents of one ſet of men could not be increaſed in value, without diminiſhing the value of the patents of ſome other ſet of men. If the rich were to ſubſcribe and give five ſhillings a day to five hundred thouſand men, without retrenching their own tables, no doubt can exiſt, that as theſe men would live more at their eaſe, and conſume a greater quantity of proviſions, there would be leſs food remaining to divide among the reſt; and conſequently each man's patent would be diminiſhed in value, or the ſame number of

pieces

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pieces of ſilver would purchaſe a ſmaller quantity of ſubſiſtence, and the price of proviſions would univerſally riſe.

Theſe general reaſonings have been ſtrikingly confirmed during the late ſcarcities. The ſuppoſition which I have made of a collection from the rich of eighteen ſhillings in the pound has been nearly realized; and the effect has been ſuch as might have been expected. If the ſame diſtribution had been made when no ſcarcity exiſted, a conſiderable advance in the price of proviſions would have been a neceſſary conſequence; but following as it did a ſcarcity, its effect muſt have been doubly powerful. No perſon, I believe, will venture to doubt, that, if we were to give three additional ſhillings a day to every labouring man in the kingdom, as I before ſuppoſed, in order that he might have meat for his dinner, the price of meat would riſe in the moſt rapid and unexampled manner. But ſurely, in a deficiency of corn, which renders it impoſſible for every man to have his uſual ſhare, if we ſtill continue to furniſh each perſon with the means of purchaſing the ſame quantity as before, the effect muſt be in every reſpect ſimilar.

It ſeems in great meaſure to have eſcaped obſervation,

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obſervation, that the price of corn in a ſcarcity will depend much more upon the obſtinacy with which the ſame degree of conſumption is perſevered in, than on the degree of the actual deficiency. A deficiency of one half of a crop, if the people could immediately conſent to conſume only one half of what they did before, would produce little or no effect on the price of corn. A deficiency of one twelfth, if exactly the ſame conſumption were to continue for ten or eleven months, might raiſe the price of corn to almoſt any height. The more is given in pariſh aſſiſtance, the more power is furniſhed of perſevering in the ſame conſumption, and of courſe the higher will the price riſe, before the neceſſary diminution of conſumption is effected.

It has been aſſerted by ſome people, that high prices do not diminiſh conſumption. If this were really true, we ſhould ſee the price of a buſhel of corn at a hundred pounds or more, in every deficiency, which could not be fully and completely remedied by importation. But the fact is, that high prices do ultimately diminiſh conſumption; but on account of the riches of the country, the unwillingneſs of the people to reſort to ſubſtitutes, and the immenſe ſums which are diſtributed by pariſhes, this object

cannot

cannot be attained, till the prices become exceſſive, and force even the middle claſſes of ſociety, or at leaſt thoſe immediately above the poor, to ſave in the article of bread from the actual inability of purchaſing it in the uſual quantity. The poor who were aſſiſted by their pariſhes had no reaſon whatever to complain of the high price of grain; becauſe it was the exceſſiveneſs of this price, and this alone, which by enforcing ſuch a ſaving left a greater quantity of corn for the conſumption of the loweſt claſſes, which corn the pariſh allowances enabled them to command. The greateſt ſufferers in the ſcarcity were undoubtedly the claſſes immediately above the poor; and theſe were in the moſt marked manner depreſſed by the exceſſive bounties given to thoſe below them. Almoſt all poverty is relative; and I much doubt whether theſe people would have been rendered ſo poor, if a ſum equal to half of theſe bounties had been taken directly out of their pockets, as they were, by that new diſtribution of the money of the ſociety which actually took place.[a] This

[a] Suppoſing the lower claſſes to earn on an average ten ſhillings a week, and the claſſes juſt above them twenty, it is not to be doubted, that in a ſcarcity theſe latter would be more ſtraightened in their power of commanding the neceſſaries

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This diſtribution, by giving to the poorer claſſes a command of food ſo much greater, than that to which their degree of ſkill and induſtry entitled them, in the actual circumſtances of the country, diminiſhed exactly in the ſame proportion that command over the neceſſaries of life, which the claſſes above them, by their ſuperior ſkill and induſtry, would naturally poſſeſs; and it may be a queſtion, whether the degree of aſſiſtance which the poor received, and which prevented them from reſorting to the uſe of thoſe ſubſtitutes, which in every other country on ſuch occaſions the great law of neceſſity teaches, was not more than overbalanced by the ſeverity of the preſſure on ſo large a body of people from the extreme high prices, and the permanent evil which muſt reſult from forcing

ceſſaries of life, by a donation of ten ſhillings a week to thoſe below them, than by the ſubtraction of five ſhillings a week from their own earnings. In the one caſe, they would be all reduced to a level; the price of proviſions would riſe in an extraordinary manner from the greatneſs of the competition; and all would be ſtraightened for ſubſiſtence. In the other caſe, the claſſes above the poor would ſtill maintain a conſiderable part of their relative ſuperiority; the price of proviſions would by no means riſe in the ſame degree; and their remaining fifteen ſhillings would purchaſe much more than their twenty ſhillings in the former caſe.

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ſo many perſons on the pariſh, who before thought themſelves almoſt out of the reach of want.

If we were to double the fortunes of all thoſe who poſſeſs above a hundred a year, the effect on the price of grain would be ſlow and inconſiderable; but if we were to double the price of labour throughout the kingdom, the effect in raiſing the price of grain would be rapid and great. The general principles on this ſubject will not admit of diſpute; and that, in the particular caſe which we have been conſidering, the bounties to the poor were of a magnitude to operate very powerfully in this manner will ſufficiently appear, if we recollect, that before the late ſcarcities the ſum collected for the poor was eſtimated at three millions, and that during the year 1801 it was ſaid to be ten millions. An additional ſeven millions acting at the bottom of the ſcale,[a] and employed exclu-

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[a] See a ſmall pamphlet publiſhed in November 1800, entitled, *An inveſtigation of the cauſe of the preſent high price of proviſions.* This pamphlet was miſtaken by ſome for an inquiry into the cauſe of the ſcarcity, and as ſuch it would naturally appear to be incomplete, adverting, as it does, principally to a ſingle cauſe. But the ſole object of the pamphlet was to give the principal reaſon for the extreme high price of proviſions,

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ſively in the purchaſe of proviſions, joined to a conſiderable advance in the price of wages in many parts of the kingdom, and increaſed by a prodigious ſum expended in voluntary charity, muſt have had a moſt powerful effect in raiſing the price of the neceſſaries of life, if any reliance can be placed on the cleareſt general principles confirmed as much as poſſible by appearances. A man with a family has received, to my knowledge, fourteen ſhillings a week from the pariſh. His common earnings were ten ſhillings a week, and his weekly revenue therefore, twenty-four. Before the ſcarcity he had been in the habit of purchaſing a buſhel of flour a week with eight ſhillings perhaps, and conſequently had two ſhillings out of his ten, to ſpare for other neceſſaries. During the ſcarcity he was enabled to purchaſe the ſame quantity at nearly three times the price. He paid twenty-two ſhillings for his buſhel of flour, and had as before two ſhillings remaining for other wants. Such inſtances could not poſſibly have been univerſal, without raiſing the price of wheat very much

viſions, in proportion to the degree of the ſcarcity, admitting the deficiency of one fourth, as ſtated in the Duke of Portland's letter; which, I am much inclined to think, was very near the truth.

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higher than it really was during any part of the dearth. But ſimilar inſtances were by no means unfrequent, and the ſyſtem itſelf of meaſuring the relief given by the price of grain was general.

If the circulation of the country had conſiſted entirely of ſpecie, which could not have been immediately increaſed, it would have been impoſſible to give ſuch an additional ſum as ſeven millions to the poor without embarraſſing to a great degree the operations of commerce. On the commencement therefore of this extenſive relief, which would neceſſarily occaſion a proportionate expenditure in proviſions throughout all the ranks of ſociety, a great demand would be felt for an increaſed circulating medium. The nature of the medium then principally in uſe was ſuch, that it could be created immediately on demand. From the accounts of the bank of England, as laid before Parliament, it appeared, that no very great additional iſſues of paper took place from this quarter. The three millions and a half added to its former average iſſues were not probably much above what was ſufficient to ſupply the quantity of ſpecie, that had been withdrawn from the circulation. If this ſuppoſition be true, and the ſmall quantity of

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of gold which made its appearance at that time furniſhes the ſtrongeſt reaſon for believing, that nearly as much as this muſt have been withdrawn, it would follow, that the part of the circulation originating in the bank of England, though changed in its nature, had not been much increaſed in its quantity; and with regard to the effect of the circulating medium on the prices of all commodities it cannot be doubted, that it would be preciſely the ſame, whether this medium were made up principally of guineas, or of pound notes and ſhillings which would paſs current for guineas.

The demand therefore for an increaſed circulating medium was left to be ſupplied principally by the country banks, and it could not be expected, that they ſhould heſitate in taking advantage of ſo profitable an opportunity. The paper iſſues of a country bank are, as I conceive, meaſured, by the quantity of its notes which will remain in circulation; and this quantity is again meaſured, ſuppoſing a confidence to be eſtabliſhed, by the ſum of what is wanted to carry on all the money tranſactions of the neighbourhood. From the high price of proviſions, all theſe tranſactions became more

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expenſive. In the ſingle article of the weekly payment of labourers' wages, including the pariſh allowances, it is evident, that a very great addition to the circulating medium of the neighbourhood would be wanted. Had the country banks attempted to iſſue the ſame quantity of paper without ſuch a particular demand for it, they would quickly have been admoniſhed of their error by its rapid and preſſing return upon them; but at this time it was wanted for immediate and daily uſe, and was therefore eagerly abſorbed into the circulation.

It may even admit of a queſtion, whether under ſimilar circumſtances the country banks would not have iſſued nearly the ſame quantity of paper, if the bank of England had not been reſtricted from payment in ſpecie. Before this event the iſſues of the country banks in paper were regulated by the quantity, that the circulation would take up; and after, as well as before, they were obliged to pay the notes which returned upon them in bank of England circulation. The difference in the two caſes would ariſe principally from the pernicious cuſtom, adopted ſince the reſtriction of the bank, of iſſuing one and two pound notes, and from the little

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little preference that many people might feel, if they could not get gold, between country bank paper and bank of England paper.

The very great iſſue of country bank paper during the years 1800 and 1801 was evidently therefore, in its origin, rather a conſequence than a cauſe of the high price of proviſions; but being once abſorbed into the circulation, it muſt neceſſarily affect the price of all commodities, and throw very great obſtacles in the way of returning cheapneſs. This is the great miſchief of the ſyſtem. During the ſcarcity, it is not to be doubted, that the increaſed circulation, by preventing the embarraſſments which commerce and ſpeculation muſt otherwiſe have felt, enabled the country to continue all the branches of its trade with leſs interruption, and to import a much greater quantity of grain, than it could have done otherwiſe; but to overbalance theſe temporary advantages, a laſting evil might be entailed upon the community, and the prices of a time of ſcarcity might become permanent, from the difficulty of reabſorbing this increaſed circulation.

In this reſpect however it is much better, that the great iſſue of paper ſhould have come from the country banks than from the bank of

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England. During the reſtriction of payment in ſpecie, there is no poſſibility of forcing the bank to retake its notes when too abundant; but with regard to the country banks, as ſoon as their notes are not wanted in the circulation, they will be returned; and if the bank of England notes be not increaſed, the whole circulating medium will thus be diminiſhed.

We may conſider ourſelves as peculiarly fortunate, that the two years of ſcarcity were ſucceeded by two events the beſt calculated to reſtore plenty and cheapneſs—an abundant harveſt, and a peace; which together produced a general conviction of plenty, in the minds both of buyers and ſellers; and by rendering the firſt ſlow to purchaſe, and the others eager to ſell, occaſioned a glut in the market, and a conſequent rapid fall of price, which has enabled pariſhes to take off their allowances to the poor, and thus to prevent a return of high prices, when the alarm among the ſellers was over.

If the two years of ſcarcity had been ſucceeded merely by years of average crops, I am ſtrongly diſpoſed to believe, that, as no glut would have taken place in the market, the price of grain would have fallen only in an inconſiderable degree, the pariſh allowances could not have been

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been reſumed, the increaſed quantity of paper would ſtill have been wanted, and the price of all commodities might by degrees have been regulated permanently according to the increaſed circulating medium.

If inſtead of giving the temporary aſſiſtance of pariſh allowances, which might be withdrawn on the firſt fall of price, we had raiſed univerſally the wages of labour, it is evident, that the obſtacles to a diminution of the circulation, and to returning cheapneſs, would have been ſtill further increaſed; and the high price of labour would have become permanent, without any advantage whatever to the labourer.

There is no one, that more ardently deſires to ſee a real advance in the price of labour than myſelf; but the attempt to effect this object by forcibly raiſing the nominal price, which was practiſed to a certain degree, and recommended almoſt univerſally during the late ſcarcities, every thinking man muſt reprobate as puerile and ineffectual.

The price of labour, when left to find its natural level, is a moſt important political barometer, expreſſing the relation between the ſupply of proviſions, and the demand for them; between the quantity to be conſumed and the number

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number of conſumers; and taken on the average, independently of acccidental circumſtances, it further expreſſes clearly the wants of the ſociety reſpecting population; that is, whatever may be the number of children to a marriage neceſſary to maintain exactly the preſent population, the price of labour will be juſt ſufficient to ſupport this number, or be above it, or below it, according to the ſtate of the real funds for the maintenance of labour, whether ſtationary, progreſſive, or retrograde. Inſtead, however, of conſidering it in this light, we conſider it as ſomething which we may raiſe or depreſs at pleaſure, ſomething which depends principally upon his majeſty's juſtices of the peace. When an advance in the price of proviſions already expreſſes, that the demand is too great for the ſupply, in order to put the labourer in the ſame condition as before, we raiſe the price of labour, that is, we increaſe the demand, and are then much ſurpriſed that the price of proviſions continues riſing. In this we act much in the ſame manner as if, when the quick-ſilver in the common weather-glaſs ſtood at *ſtormy*, we were to raiſe it by ſome mechanical preſſure to *ſettled fair*, and then be greatly aſtoniſhed, that it continued raining.

Dr.

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Dr. Smith has clearly ſhown, that the natural tendency of a year of ſcarcity is either to throw a number of labourers out of employment, or to oblige them to work for leſs than they did before, from the inability of maſters to employ the ſame number at the ſame price. The raiſing of the price of wages tends neceſſarily to throw more out of employment, and completely to prevent the good effects, which, he ſays, ſometimes ariſe from a year of moderate ſcarcity, that of making the lower claſſes of people do more work, and become more careful and induſtrious. The number of ſervants out of place, and the manufacturers wanting employment, during the late ſcarcities, were melancholy proofs of the truth of theſe reaſonings. If a general riſe in the wages of labour had taken place proportioned to the price of proviſions, none but farmers and a few gentleman could have afforded to employ the ſame number of workmen as before. Additional crowds of ſervants and manufacturers would have been turned off; and thoſe who were thus thrown out of employment would of courſe have no other refuge than the pariſh. In the natural order of things a ſcarcity muſt tend to lower, inſtead of to raiſe, the price of labour.

After

After the publication and general circulation of ſuch a work as Dr. Smith's, I confeſs it appears to me ſtrange, that ſo many men, who would yet aſpire to be thought political economiſts, ſhould ſtill think, that it is in the power of the juſtices of the peace, or even of the omnipotence of parliament, to alter by a *fiat* the whole circumſtances of the country; and when the demand for proviſions is greater than the ſupply, by publiſhing a particular edict, to make the ſupply at once equal to or greater than the demand. Many men, who would ſhrink at the propoſal of a maximum, would propoſe themſelves, that the price of labour ſhould be proportioned to the price of proviſions, and do not ſeem to be aware, that the two propoſals are very nearly of the ſame nature, and that both tend directly to famine. It matters not whether we enable the labourer to purchaſe the ſame quantity of proviſions, which he did before, by fixing their price, or by raiſing in proportion the price of labour. The only advantage on the ſide of raiſing the price of labour is, that the riſe in the price of proviſions, which neceſſarily follows it, encourages importation: but putting importation out of the queſtion, which might poſſibly be prevented by war, or other circumſtances, a univerſal

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univerſal riſe of wages in proportion to the price of proviſions, aided by adequate pariſh allowances to thoſe who were thrown out of work, would, by preventing any kind of ſaving, in the ſame manner as a maximum, cauſe the whole crop to be conſumed in nine months, which ought to have laſted twelve, and thus produce a famine. At the ſame time we muſt not forget, that both humanity and true policy imperiouſly require, that we ſhould give every aſſiſtance to the poor on theſe occaſions, that the nature of the caſe will admit. If proviſions were to continue at the price of ſcarcity, the wages of labour muſt neceſſarily riſe, or ſickneſs and famine would quickly diminiſh the number of labourers; and the ſupply of labour being unequal to the demand, its price would ſoon riſe in a ſtill greater proportion than the price of proviſions. But even one or two years of ſcarcity, if the poor were left entirely to ſhift for themſelves, might produce ſome effect of this kind, and conſequently it is our intereſt, as well as our duty, to give them temporary aid in ſuch ſeaſons of diſtreſs. It is on ſuch occaſions, that every cheap ſubſtitute for bread, and every mode of economizing food ſhould be reſorted to. Nor ſhould we be too ready to complain of that high price

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price of corn, which by encouraging importation increaſes the ſupply.

As the inefficacy of poor laws, and of attempts forcibly to raiſe the price of labour, is moſt conſpicuous in a ſcarcity, I have thought myſelf juſtified in conſidering them under this view; and as theſe cauſes of increaſed price received great additional force during the late ſcarcity from the increaſe of the circulating medium, I truſt, that the few obſervations which I have made on this ſubject will be conſidered as an allowable digreſſion.

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CHAP. VI.

Subject of Poor Laws continued.

INDEPENDENTLY of any conſiderations reſpecting a year of deficient crops it is evident, that an increaſe of population, without a proportional increaſe of food, muſt lower the value of each man's earnings. The food muſt neceſſarily be diſtributed in ſmaller quantities, and conſequently a day's labour will purchaſe a ſmaller quantity of proviſions. An increaſe in the price of proviſions will ariſe either from an increaſe of population faſter than the means of ſubſiſtence, or from a different diſtribution of the money of the ſociety. The food of a country which has been long peopled, if it be increaſing, increaſes ſlowly and regularly, and cannot be made to anſwer any ſudden demands; but variations in the diſtribution of the money of the ſociety are not unfrequently occurring, and are undoubtedly among the cauſes, which occaſion the continual variations in the prices of proviſions.

The

The poor laws of England tend to depreſs the general condition of the poor in theſe two ways. Their firſt obvious tendency is to increaſe population without increaſing the food for its ſupport. A poor man may marry with little or no proſpect of being able to ſupport a family without pariſh aſſiſtance. They may be ſaid, therefore, to create the poor which they maintain; and as the proviſions of the country muſt, in conſequence of the increaſed population, be diſtributed to every man in ſmaller proportions, it is evident, that the labour of thoſe who are not ſupported by pariſh aſſiſtance will purchaſe a ſmaller quantity of proviſions than before, and conſequently more of them muſt be driven to apply for aſſiſtance.

Secondly the quantity of proviſions conſumed in workhouſes, upon a part of the ſociety that cannot in general be conſidered as the moſt valuable part, diminiſhes the ſhares, that would otherwiſe belong to more induſtrious and more worthy members, and thus, in the ſame manner, forces more to become dependent. If the poor in the workhouſes were to live better than they do now, this new diſtribution of the money of the ſociety would tend more conſpicuouſly to depreſs the condition of thoſe out of the workhouſes

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houſes by occaſioning an advance in the price of proviſions.

Fortunately for England, a ſpirit of independence ſtill remains among the peaſantry. The poor laws are ſtrongly calculated to eradicate this ſpirit. They have ſucceeded in part; but had they ſucceeded as completely as might have been expected, their pernicious tendency would not have been ſo long concealed.

Hard as it may appear in individual inſtances, dependent poverty ought to be held diſgraceful. Such a ſtimulus ſeems to be abſolutely neceſſary to promote the happineſs of the great maſs of mankind; and every general attempt to weaken this ſtimulus, however benevolent its intention, will always defeat its own purpoſe. If men be induced to marry from the mere proſpect of pariſh proviſion, they are not only unjuſtly tempted to bring unhappineſs and dependence upon themſelves and children, but they are tempted, without knowing it, to injure all in the ſame claſs with themſelves.

The poor laws of England appear to have contributed to raiſe the price of proviſions, and to lower the real price of labour. They have therefore contributed to impoveriſh that claſs of people, whoſe only poſſeſſion is their labour. It

is alſo difficult to ſuppoſe, that they have not powerfully contributed to generate that careleſſneſs and want of frugality obſervable among the poor, ſo contrary to the diſpoſition generally to be remarked among petty tradeſmen and ſmall farmers. The labouring poor, to uſe a vulgar expreſſion, ſeem always to live from hand to mouth. Their preſent wants employ their whole attention; and they ſeldom think of the future. Even when they have an opportunity of ſaving, they ſeldom exerciſe it; but all that they earn beyond their preſent neceſſities goes, generally ſpeaking, to the alehouſe. The poor laws may therefore be ſaid to diminiſh both the power and the will to ſave among the common people, and thus to weaken one of the ſtrongeſt incentives to ſobriety and induſtry, and conſequently to happineſs.

It is a general complaint among maſter manufacturers, that high wages ruin all their workmen; but it is difficult to conceive, that theſe men would not ſave a part of their high wages for the future ſupport of their families, inſtead of ſpending it in drunkenneſs and diſſipation, if they did not rely on pariſh aſſiſtance for ſupport in caſe of accidents. And that the poor employed in manufactures conſider this aſſiſtance

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as a reaſon why they may ſpend all the wages which they earn, and enjoy themſelves while they can, appears to be evident, from the number of families, that, upon the failure of any great manufactory, immediately fall upon the pariſh; when perhaps the wages earned in this manufactory, while it flouriſhed, were ſufficiently above the price of common country labour, to have allowed them to ſave enough for their ſupport, till they could find ſome other channel for their induſtry.

A man who might not be deterred from going to the alehouſe from the conſideration, that on his death or ſickneſs he ſhould leave his wife and family upon the pariſh, might yet heſitate in thus diſſipating his earnings, if he were aſſured, that in either of theſe caſes his family muſt ſtarve, or be left to the ſupport of caſual bounty.

The maſs of happineſs among the common people cannot but be diminiſhed, when one of the ſtrongeſt checks to idleneſs and diſſipation is thus removed; and poſitive inſtitutions, which render dependent poverty ſo general, weaken that diſgrace, which for the beſt and moſt humane reaſons ought to be attached to it.

The poor laws of England were undoubtedly

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inſtituted for the moſt benevolent purpoſe; but it is evident they have failed in attaining it. They certainly mitigate ſome caſes of ſevere diſtreſs, which might otherwiſe occur; though the ſtate of the poor who are ſupported by pariſhes, conſidered in all its circumſtances, is very miſerable. But one of the principal objections to the ſyſtem is, that for the aſſiſtance which ſome of the poor receive, in itſelf almoſt a doubtful bleſſing, the whole claſs of the common people of England is ſubjected to a ſet of grating, inconvenient, and tyrannical laws, totally inconſiſtent with the genuine ſpirit of the conſtitution. The whole buſineſs of ſettlements, even in its preſent amended ſtate, is contradictory to all ideas of freedom. The pariſh perſecution of men whoſe families are likely to become chargeable, and of poor women who are near lying in, is a moſt diſgraceful and diſguſting tyranny. And the obſtructions continually occaſioned in the market of labour by theſe laws have a conſtant tendency, to add to the difficulties of thoſe, who are ſtruggling to ſupport themſelves without aſſiſtance.

Theſe evils attendant on the poor laws ſeem to be irremediable. If aſſiſtance be to be diſtributed to a certain claſs of people, a power muſt

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muſt be lodged ſomewhere of diſcriminating the proper objects, and of managing the concerns of the inſtitutions that are neceſſary; but any great interference with the affairs of other people is a ſpecies of tyranny, and in the common courſe of things, the exerciſe of this power may be expected to become grating to thoſe who are driven to aſk for ſupport. The tyranny of churchwardens and overſeers is a common complaint among the poor; but the fault does not lie ſo much in theſe perſons, who probably before they were in power were not worſe than other people, but in the nature of all ſuch inſtitutions.

I feel perſuaded, that, if the poor laws had never exiſted in this country, though there might have been a few more inſtances of very ſevere diſtreſs, the aggregate maſs of happineſs among the common people would have been much greater than it is at preſent.

The radical defect of all ſyſtems of the kind is that of tending to depreſs the condition of thoſe that are not relieved by pariſhes, and to create more poor. If, indeed, we examine ſome of our ſtatutes ſtrictly with reference to the principle of population, we ſhall find, that they attempt an abſolute impoſſibility; and we

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cannot be ſupriſed, therefore, that they ſhould conſtantly fail in the attainment of their object.

The famous 43d of Elizabeth, which has been ſo often referred to and admired, enacts, that the overſeers of the poor, "ſhall take order "from time to time, by and with the conſent "of two or more juſtices, for ſetting to work "the children of all ſuch, whoſe parents ſhall "not by the ſaid perſons be thought able to "keep and maintain their children; and alſo "ſuch perſons married or unmarried, as, having "no means to maintain them, uſe no ordinary "and daily trade of life to get their living by. "And alſo to raiſe, weekly or otherwiſe, by "taxation of every inhabitant, and every occu-"pier of lands in the ſaid pariſh, (in ſuch com-"petent ſums as they ſhall think fit) a con-"venient ſtock of flax, hemp, wool, thread, "iron, and other neceſſary ware and ſtuff, to "ſet the poor to work."

What is this but ſaying, that the funds for the maintenance of labour in this country may be increaſed at will, and without limit, by a *fiat* of government, or an aſſeſſment of the overſeers? Strictly ſpeaking, this clauſe is as arrogant and as abſurd, as if it had enacted, that two ears of wheat ſhould in future grow where one

one only had grown before. Canute, when he commanded the waves not to wet his princely foot, did not in reality aſſume a greater power over the laws of nature. No directions are given to the overſeers how to increaſe the funds for the maintenance of labour; the neceſſity of induſtry, economy, and enlightened exertion, in the management of agricultural and commercial capital, is not inſiſted on for this purpoſe; but it is expected, that a miraculous increaſe of theſe funds ſhould immediately follow an edict of the government uſed at the diſcretion of ſome ignorant pariſh officers.

If this clauſe were really and *bona fide* put in execution, and the ſhame attending the receiving of pariſh aſſiſtance worn off, every labouring man might marry as early as he pleaſed, under the certain proſpect of having all his children properly provided for; and as, according to the ſuppoſition, there would be no check to population from the conſequences of poverty after marriage, the increaſe of people would be rapid beyond example in old ſtates. After what has been ſaid in the former parts of this work, it is ſubmitted to the reader, whether the utmoſt exertions of the moſt enlightened government could, in this caſe, make the food

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keep pace with the population; much leſs a mere arbitrary edict, the tendency of which is certainly rather to diminiſh than to increaſe the funds for the maintenance of productive labour.

In the actual circumſtances of every country, the prolific power of nature ſeems to be always ready to exert nearly its full force; but within the limit of poſſibility, there is nothing perhaps more improbable, or more out of the reach of any government to effect, than the direction of the induſtry of its ſubjects in ſuch a manner, as to produce the greateſt quantity of human ſuſtenance that the earth could bear. It evidently could not be done without the moſt complete violation of the law of property, from which every thing that is valuable to man has hitherto ariſen. Such is the diſpoſition to marry, particularly in very young people, that, if the difficulties of providing for a family were entirely removed, very few would remain ſingle at twenty two. But what ſtateſman or rational government could propoſe, that all animal food ſhould be prohibited, that no horſes ſhould be uſed for buſineſs or pleaſure, that all the people ſhould live upon potatoes, and that the whole induſtry of the nation ſhould be exerted in the production of them, except what was required for the

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mere neceſſaries of clothing and houſes? Could ſuch a revolution be effected, would it be deſirable? particularly as in a few years, notwithſtanding all theſe exertions, want, with leſs reſource than ever, would inevitably recur.

After a country has once ceaſed to be in the peculiar ſituation of a new colony, we ſhall always find, that in the actual ſtate of its cultivation, or in that ſtate which may rationally be expected from the moſt enlightened government, the increaſe of its food can never allow for any length of time an unreſtricted increaſe of population; and therefore the due execution of the clauſe in the 43d of Elizabeth, as a permanent law, is a phyſical impoſſibility.

It will be ſaid, perhaps, that the fact contradicts the theory; and that the clauſe in queſtion has remained in force, and has been executed, during the laſt two hundred years. In anſwer to this, I ſhould ſay without heſitation, that it has not really been executed; and that it is merely owing to its incomplete execution, that it remains on our ſtatute book at preſent.

The ſcanty relief granted to perſons in diſtreſs, the capricious and inſulting manner in which it is ſometimes diſtributed by the overſeers, and the natural and becoming pride not yet

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yet quite extinct among the peasantry of England, have deterred the more thinking and virtuous part of them from venturing on marriage, without some better prospect of maintaining their families than mere parish assistance. The desire of bettering our condition, and the fear of making it worse, like the *vis medicatrix naturæ* in physick, is the *vis medicatrix reipublicæ* in politics, and is continually counteracting the disorders arising from narrow human institutions. In spite of the prejudices in favour of population, and the direct encouragements to marriage from the poor laws, it operates as a preventive check to increase; and happy for this country is it, that it does so. But besides that spirit of independence and prudence, which checks the frequency of marriage, notwithstanding the encouragements of the poor laws, these laws themselves occasion a check of no inconsiderable magnitude, and thus counteract with one hand what they encourage with the other. As each parish is obliged to maintain its own poor, it is naturally fearful of increasing their number; and every landholder is in consequence more inclined to pull down than to build cottages, except when the demand for labourers is really urgent. This deficiency of cottages operates necessarily as a strong

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ſtrong check to marriage; and this check is probably the principal reaſon, why we have been able to continue the ſyſtem of the poor laws ſo long.

Thoſe who are not prevented for a time from marrying by theſe cauſes, are either relieved very ſcantily at their own homes, where they ſuffer all the conſequences ariſing from ſqualid poverty; or they are crowded together in cloſe and unwholeſome workhouſes, where a great mortality almoſt univerſally takes place, particularly among the young children. The dreadful account given by Jonas Hanway of the treatment of pariſh children in London is well known; and it appears from Mr. Howlett and other writers, that in ſome parts of the country their ſituation is not very much better. A great part of the redundant population occaſioned by the poor laws is thus taken off by the operation of the laws themſelves, or at leaſt by their ill execution. The remaining part which ſurvives, by cauſing the funds for the maintenance of labour to be divided among a greater number than can be properly maintained by them, and by turning a conſiderable ſhare from the ſupport of the diligent and careful workman to the ſupport of the idle and the negligent, depreſſes the

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the condition of all thoſe who are out of the workhouſes, forces more every year into them, and has ultimately produced the enormous evil, which we all ſo juſtly deplore; that of the great and unnatural proportion of the people, which is now become dependent upon charity.

If this be a juſt repreſentation of the manner, in which the clauſe in queſtion has been executed, and of the effects which it has produced, it muſt be allowed, that we have practiſed an unpardonable deceit upon the poor, and have promiſed what we have been very far from performing.

The attempts to employ the poor on any great ſcale in manufactures have almoſt invariably failed, and the ſtock and materials have been waſted. In thoſe few pariſhes, which, by better management or larger funds, have been enabled to perſevere in this ſyſtem, the effect of theſe new manufactures in the market muſt have been to throw out of employment many independent workmen, who were before engaged in fabrications of a ſimilar nature. This effect has been placed in a ſtrong point of view by Daniel de Foe, in an addreſs to parliament, entitled, *Giving alms no charity*. Speaking of the employment of pariſh children in manufactures, he ſays,

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For every ſkein of worſted theſe poor children ſpin, there muſt be a ſkein the leſs ſpun by ſome poor family that ſpun it before; and for every piece of baize ſo made in London, there muſt be a piece the leſs made at Colcheſter, or ſomewhere elſe.[a] Sir F. M. Eden, on the ſame ſubject, obſerves, that whether mops and brooms are made by pariſh children or by private workmen, no more can be ſold, than the public is in want of.[b]

It will be ſaid, perhaps, that the ſame reaſoning might be applied to any new captital brought into competition in a particular trade or manu-

[a] See extracts from Daniel de Foe, in Sir F. M. Eden's valuable work on the poor, vol. i, p. 261.

[b] Sir F. M. Eden, ſpeaking of the ſuppoſed right of the poor to be ſupplied with employment while able to work, and with a maintenance when incapacitated from labour, very juſtly remarks, "It may however be doubted, whether any right, the "gratification of which ſeems to be impracticable, can be "ſaid to exiſt," vol. i, p. 447. No man has collected ſo many materials for forming a judgment on the effects of the poor laws as Sir F. M. Eden, and the reſult he thus expreſſes: "Upon the whole therefore there ſeems to be juſt grounds "for concluding, that the ſum of good to be expected from a "compulſory maintenance of the poor will be far out-"balanced by the ſum of evil, which it will inevitably create," vol. i, p. 467. I am happy to have the ſanction of ſo practical an inquirer to my opinion of the poor laws.

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facture, which can rarely be done without injuring, in some degree, those that were engaged in it before. But there is a material difference in the two cases. In this, the competition is perfectly fair, and what every man on entering into business must lay his account to. He may rest secure, that he will not be supplanted, unless his competitor possess superior skill and industry. In the other case, the competition is supported by a great bounty, by which means, notwithstanding very inferior skill and industry on the part of his competitors, the independent workman may be undersold, and unjustly excluded from the market. He himself perhaps is made to contribute to this competition against his own earnings, and the funds for the maintenance of labour are thus turned from the support of a trade which yields a proper profit, to one which cannot maintain itself without a bounty. It should be observed in general, that, when a fund for the maintenance of labour is raised by assessment, the greatest part of it is not a new capital brought into trade, but an old one, which before was much more profitably employed, turned into a new channel. The farmer pays to the poor's rates for the encouragement of a bad and unprofitable manufacture,

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ture, what he would have employed on his land with infinitely more advantage to his country. In the one caſe, the funds for the maintenance of labour are daily diminiſhed; in the other, daily increaſed. And this obvious tendency of aſſeſſments for the employment of the poor, to decreaſe the real funds for the maintenance of labour in any country, aggravates the abſurdity of ſuppoſing, that it is in the power of a government to find employment for all its ſubjects, however faſt they may increaſe.

It is not intended, that theſe reaſonings ſhould be applied againſt every mode of employing the poor on a limited ſcale, and with ſuch reſtrictions as may not encourage at the ſame time their increaſe. I would never wiſh to puſh general principles too far; though I think, that they ought always to be kept in view. In particular caſes the individual good to be obtained may be ſo great, and the general evil ſo ſlight, that the former may clearly overbalance the latter.

The intention is merely to ſhow, that the poor laws as a general ſyſtem are founded on a groſs error: and that the common declamation on the ſubject of the poor, which we ſee ſo often in print, and hear continually in converſation, namely, that the market price of labour ought

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ought always to be sufficient decently to support a family, and that employment ought to be found for all those who are willing to work, is in effect to say; that the funds for the maintenance of labour in this country are not only infinite, but might be made to increase with such rapidity, that supposing us to have at present six millions of labourers, including their families, we might have 96 millions in another century; or if these funds had been properly managed since the beginning of the reign of Edward I, supposing that there were then only two millions of labourers, we might now have possessed above four million millions of labourers, or about four thousand times as many labourers, as it has been calculated that there are people now on the face of the earth.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

Of increaſing Wealth as it affects the Condition of the Poor.

THE profeſſed object of Dr. Smith's inquiry is the nature and cauſes of the wealth of nations. There is another however perhaps ſtill more intereſting, which he occaſionally mixes with it, the cauſes that affect the happineſs and comfort of the lower orders of ſociety, which in every nation form the moſt numerous claſs. I am ſufficiently aware of the near connexion of theſe two ſubjects, and that generally ſpeaking the cauſes, which contribute to increaſe the wealth of a ſtate, tend alſo to increaſe the happineſs of the lower claſſes of the people. But perhaps Dr. Smith has conſidered theſe two inquiries as ſtill more nearly connected than they really are; at leaſt, he has not ſtopped to take notice of thoſe inſtances, where the wealth of a ſociety may increaſe according to his definition of wealth, without having a proportional tendency to increaſe the comforts of the labouring part of it.

I do not mean to enter into any philoſophi-

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cal discussion of what constitutes the proper happiness of man, but shall merely consider two universally acknowledged ingredients, the command of the necessaries and comforts of life, and the possession of health.

The comforts of the labouring poor must necessarily depend upon the funds destined for the maintenance of labour; and will generally be in proportion to the rapidity of their increase. The demand for labour, which such increase occasions, will of course raise the value of labour; and till the additional number of hands required are reared, the increased funds will be distributed to the same number of persons as before, and therefore every labourer will live comparatively at his ease. The error of Dr. Smith lies in representing every increase of the revenue or stock of a society as a proportional increase of these funds. Such surplus stock or revenue will indeed always be considered by the individual possessing it as an additional fund, from which he may maintain more labour; but with regard to the whole country, it will not be an effectual fund for the maintenance of an additional number of labourers, unless part of it be convertible into an additional quantity of provisions; and it may not be so convertible, where the increase has

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ariſen merely from the produce of labour, and not from the produce of land. A diſtinction may in this caſe occur between the number of hands which the ſtock of the ſociety could employ, and the number which its territory can maintain.

Dr. Smith defines the wealth of a ſtate to be the annual produce of its land and labour. This definition evidently includes manufactured produce as well as the produce of the land. Now ſuppoſing a nation for a courſe of years to add what it ſaved from its yearly revenue to its manufacturing capital ſolely, and not to its capital employed upon land, it is evident, that it might grow richer according to the above definition, without a power of ſupporting a greater number of labourers, and therefore without any increaſe in the real funds for the maintenance of labour. There would notwithſtanding be a demand for labour, from the extenſion of manufacturing capital. This demand would of courſe raiſe the price of labour; but if the yearly ſtock of proviſions in the country were not increaſing, this riſe would ſoon turn out to be merely nominal, as the price of proviſions muſt neceſſarily riſe with it. The demand for manufacturing labourers would probably entice ſome from pri-

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vate ſervice, and ſome even from agriculture; but we will ſuppoſe any effects of this kind on agriculture to be compenſated by improvements in the inſtruments or mode of culture, and the quantity of proviſions therefore to remain the ſame. Improvements in manufacturing machinery would of courſe take place; and this circumſtance, added to the greater number of hands employed in manufactures, would augment conſiderably the annual produce of the labour of the country. The wealth therefore of the country would be increaſing annually, according to the definition, and might not be increaſing very ſlowly.[a]

The queſtion is, how far wealth increaſing in

[a] I have ſuppoſed here a caſe which, in a landed nation, I allow to be very improbable in fact; but approximations to it are perhaps not unfrequently taking place. My intention is merely to ſhow, that the funds for the maintenance of labour do not increaſe exactly in proportion to the increaſe in the produce of the land and labour of a country, but with the ſame increaſe of produce, may be more or leſs favourable to the labourer, according as the increaſe has riſen principally from agriculture or from manufactures. On the ſuppoſition of a phyſical impoſſibility of increaſing the food of a country it is evident, that by improvements in machinery it might grow yearly richer in the exchangeable value of its manufactured produce, but the labourer, though he might be better clothed and lodged, could not be better fed.

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this way has a tendency to better the condition of the labouring poor. It is a ſelf-evident propoſition, that any general advance in the price of labour, the ſtock of proviſions remaining the ſame, can only be a nominal advance, as it muſt ſhortly be followed by a proportional riſe in proviſions. The increaſe in the price of labour, which we have ſuppoſed, would have no permanent effect therefore in giving to the labouring poor a greater command over the neceſſaries of life. In this reſpect they would be nearly in the ſame ſtate as before. In ſome other reſpects they would be in a worſe ſtate. A greater proportion of them would be employed in manufactures, and a ſmaller proportion in agriculture. And this exchange of profeſſions will be allowed, I think, by all, to be very unfavourable to health, one eſſential ingredient of happineſs; and to be further diſadvantageous on account of the greater uncertainty of manufacturing labour, ariſing from the capricious taſte of man, the accidents of war, and other cauſes which occaſionally produce very ſevere diſtreſs among the lower claſſes of ſociety. On the ſtate of the poor employed in manufactories, with reſpect to health and other circumſtances which affect their happineſs, I will beg leave to quote a paſ-

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ſage from Dr. Aikin's deſcription of the country round Mancheſter.

" The invention and improvements of ma-
" chines to ſhorten labour have had a ſurpriſ-
" ing influence to extend our trade, and alſo to
" call in hands from all parts, eſpecially chil-
" dren for the cotton mills. It is the wiſe plan
" of Providence, that in this life there ſhall be
" no good without its attendant inconvenience.
" There are many which are too obvious in
" theſe cotton mills and ſimilar factories, which
" counteract that increaſe of population uſually
" conſequent on the improved facility of labour.
" In theſe, children of very tender age are em-
" ployed, many of them collected from the
" workhouſes in London and Weſtminſter, and
" tranſported in crowds as apprentices to maſ-
" ters reſident many hundred miles diſtant,
" where they ſerve unknown, unprotected, and
" forgotten by thoſe to whoſe care nature or
" the laws had conſigned them. Theſe chil-
" dren are uſually too long confined to work in
" cloſe rooms, often during the whole night.
" The air they breathe from the oil &c. em-
" ployed in the machinery, and other circum-
" ſtances, is injurious; little attention is paid
" to their cleanlineſs; and frequent changes

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" from a warm and denſe to a cold and thin " atmoſphere are prediſpoſing cauſes to ſick- " neſs and diſability, and particularly to the " epidemic fever which is ſo generally to be " met with in theſe factories. It is alſo much " to be queſtioned, if ſociety does not receive " detriment from the manner in which chil- " dren are thus employed during their early " years They are not generally ſtrong to la- " bour, or capable of purſuing any other branch " of buſineſs, when the term of their appren- " ticeſhip expires. The females are wholly " uninſtructed in ſowing, knitting, and other " domeſtic affairs, requiſite to make them " notable and frugal wives and mothers. This " is a very great misfortune to them and the " public, as is ſadly proved by a compariſion of " the families of labourers in huſbandry, and " thoſe of manufacturers in general. In the " former we meet with neatneſs, cleanlineſs, " and comfort; in the latter, with filth, rags, " and poverty, although their wages may be " nearly double to thoſe of the huſbandman. " It muſt be added, that the want of early re- " ligious inſtruction and example, and the nu- " merous and indiſcriminate aſſociation in theſe

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" buildings, are very unfavourable to their fu-
" ture conduct in life."[a]

In addition to the evils mentioned in this paſſage, we all know how ſubject particular manufactures are to fail, from the caprice of taſte, or the accident of war. The weavers of Spital-fields were plunged into the moſt ſevere diſtreſs by the faſhion of muſlins inſtead of ſilks; and numbers of the workmen in Sheffield and Birmingham were for a time thrown out of employment, from the adoption of ſhoe-ſtrings and covered buttons, inſtead of buckles and metal buttons. Our manufactures, taken in the maſs, have increaſed with great rapidity; but in particular places they have failed, and the pariſhes where this has happened are invariably loaded with a crowd of poor in the moſt diſtreſſed and miſerable condition. In the work of Dr. Aikin juſt alluded to, it appears, that the regiſter for the collegiate church at Mancheſter, from Chriſtmas 1793 to Chriſtmas 1794, ſtated a decreaſe of 168 marriages, 538 chriſtenings,

[a] P. 219. Endeavours have been made, Dr. Aikin ſays, to remedy theſe evils, and in ſome factories they have been attended with ſucceſs. An act of parliament has of late alſo paſſed on this ſubject, from which it is hoped, that much good will reſult.

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and 250 burials. And in the parish of Rochdale in the neighbourhood, a still more melancholy reduction, in proportion to the number of people, took place. In 1792 the births were 746, the burials 646, and the marriages 339. In 1794 the births were 373, the burials 671, and the marriages 199. The cause of this sudden check to population was the commencement of the war, and the failure of commercial credit, which occurred about this time; and such a check could not have taken place in so sudden a manner, without being occasioned by the most severe distress.

Under such circumstances of situation, unless the increase of the riches of a country from manufactures give the lower classes of the society, on an average, a decidedly greater command over the necessaries and conveniences of life, it will not appear, that their condition is improved.

It will be said, perhaps, that the advance in the price of provisions will immediately turn some additional capital into the channel of agriculture, and thus occasion a much greater produce. But from experience it appears, that this is an effect which sometimes follows very slowly; particularly if heavy taxes, that affect agricultural

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tural induſtry, and an advance in the price of labour, had preceded the advance in the price of proviſions.

It may alſo be ſaid, that the additional capital of the nation would enable it to import proviſions ſufficient for the maintenance of thoſe whom its ſtock could employ. A ſmall country with a large navy, and great accommodations for inland carriage, may indeed import and diſtribute an effectual quantity of proviſions; but in large landed nations, if they may be ſo called, an importation adequate at all times to the demand is ſcarcely poſſible.

It ſeems in great meaſure to have eſcaped attention, that a nation, which, from its extent of territory and population, muſt neceſſarily ſupport the greater part of its people on the produce of its own ſoil, but which yet in average years draws a ſmall portion of its corn from abroad, is in a much more precarious ſituation, with regard to the conſtancy of its ſupplies, than ſuch ſtates as draw almoſt the whole of their proviſions from other countries. The demands of Holland and Hamburgh may be known with conſiderable accuracy by thoſe who ſupply them. If they increaſe, they increaſe gradually, and are not ſubject from year to year

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to any great and ſudden variations. But it is otherwiſe with ſuch a country as England. Suppoſing it, in average years, to want about four hundred thouſand quarters of wheat. Such a demand will of courſe be very eaſily ſupplied. But a year of deficient crops occurs, and the demand is ſuddenly two millions of quarters. If the demand had been on an average two millions, it might perhaps have been adequately ſupplied, from the extended agriculture of thoſe countries, which are in the habit of exporting corn: but we cannot expect, that it can eaſily be anſwered thus ſuddenly; and indeed we know from experience, that an unuſual demand of this nature, in a nation capable of paying for it, cannot exiſt, without raiſing the price of wheat very conſiderably in all the ports of Europe. Hamburgh, Holland, and the ports of the Baltic, felt very ſenſibly the high prices of England during the late ſcarcity; and I have been informed, from very good authority, that the price of bread in New York was little inferior to the higheſt price in London.

A nation poſſeſſed of a large territory is unavoidably ſubject to this uncertainty in its means of ſubſiſtence, when the commercial part of its population is either equal to or has increaſed beyond

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beyond the ſurplus produce of its cultivators No reſerve being in theſe caſes left in the ſtore deſtined for exportation, the full effect of every deficiency from unfavourable ſeaſons muſt neceſſarily be felt: and though the riches of ſuch a country may enable it for a certain period to continue raiſing the nominal price of wages, ſo as to give the lower claſſes of the ſociety a power of purchaſing imported corn at a high price; yet, as a ſudden demand can very ſeldom be fully anſwered, the competition in the market will invariably raiſe the price of proviſions, in full proportion to the advance in the price of labour; the lower claſſes will be but little relieved; and the dearth will operate ſeverely throughout all the ranks of ſociety.

According to the natural order of things, years of ſcarcity muſt occaſionally recur in all landed nations. They ought always therefore to enter into our conſideration; and the proſperity of any country may juſtly be conſidered as precarious, in which the funds for the maintenence of labour are liable to great and ſudden fluctuations from every unfavourable variation in the ſeaſons.

But putting, for the preſent, years of ſcarcity out of the queſtion; when the commercial population

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pulation of any country increaſes ſo much beyond the ſurplus produce of the cultivators, that the demand for imported corn is not eaſily ſupplied, and the price riſes in proportion to the price of wages, no further increaſe of riches will have any tendency to give the labourer a greater command over the neceſſaries of life. In the progreſs of wealth this will naturally take place; either from the largeneſs of the ſupply wanted; the increaſed diſtance from which it is brought, and conſequently the increaſed expenſe of importation; the greater conſumption of it in the countries in which it is uſually purchaſed; or what muſt unavoidably happen, the neceſſity of a greater diſtance of inland carriage in theſe countries. Such a nation, by increaſing induſtry, and increaſing ingenuity in the improvement of machinery, may ſtill go on increaſing the yearly quantity of its manufactured produce; but its funds for the maintenance of labour, and conſequently its population will be perfectly ſtationary. This point is the natural limit to the population of all commercial ſtates.[a] In countries

[a] Sir James Steuart's Political Œconomy, vol. i, b. i, c. xviii, p. 119. It is probable, that Holland before the revolution had nearly reached this point, not ſo much however from

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countries at a great diſtance from this limit, an effect approaching to what has been here deſcribed will take place, whenever the march of commerce and manufactures is more rapid than that of agriculture. During the laſt ten or twelve years it cannot be doubted, that the annual produce of the land and labour of England has very rapidly increaſed, and in conſequence the nominal wages of labour have greatly increaſed; but the real recompenſe of the labourer, though increaſed, has not increaſed in proportion.

That every increaſe of the ſtock or revenue of a nation cannot be conſidered as an increaſe of the real funds for the maintenance of labour, and therefore cannot have the ſame good effect upon the condition of the poor, will appear in a ſtrong light, if the argument be applied to China.

Dr. Smith obſerves, that China has probably long been as rich as the nature of her laws and inſtitutions will admit; but that, with other laws and inſtitutions, and if foreign commerce

from the difficulty of obtaining more foreign corn, but from the very heavy taxes, which were impoſed on this firſt neceſſary of life. All the great landed nations of Europe are certainly at a conſiderable diſtance from this point at preſent.

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were held in honour, ſhe might ſtill be much richer. The queſtion is, would ſuch an increaſe of wealth be an increaſe of the real funds for the maintenance of labour, and conſequently tend to place the lower claſſes of people in China in a ſtate of greater plenty?

If trade and foreign commerce were held in great honour in China, it is evident, that, from the great number of labourers, and the cheapneſs of labour, ſhe might work up manufactures for foreign ſale to an immenſe amount. It is equally evident, that from the great bulk of proviſions, and the amazing extent of her inland territory, ſhe could not in return import ſuch a quantity, as would be any ſenſible addition to the annual ſtock of ſubſiſtence in the country. Her immenſe amount of manufactures therefore ſhe could exchange chiefly for luxuries collected from all parts of the world. At preſent it appears, that no labour whatever is ſpared in the production of food. The country is rather overpeopled in proportion to what its ſtock can employ, and labour is therefore ſo abundant, that no pains are taken to abridge it. The conſequence of this is probably the greateſt production of food, that the ſoil can poſſibly afford; for it will be obſerved, that proceſſes for

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abridging agricultural labour, though they may enable a farmer to bring a certain quantity of grain cheaper to market, ſometimes tend rather to diminiſh than increaſe the whole produce. An immenſe capital could not be employed in China in preparing manufactures for foreign trade, without taking off ſo many labourers from agriculture as to alter this ſtate of things, and in ſome degree, to diminiſh the produce of the country. The demand for manufacturing labourers would naturally raiſe the price of labour; but as the quantity of ſubſiſtence would not be increaſed, the price of proviſions would keep pace with it, or even more than keep pace with it, if the quantity of proviſions were really decreaſing. The country would however be evidently advancing in wealth; the exchangeable value of the annual produce of its land and labour would be annually augmented; yet the real funds for the maintenance of labour would be ſtationary or even declining; and conſequently the increaſing wealth of the nation would tend rather to depreſs than to raiſe the condition of the poor.[a] With regard

[a] The condition of the poor in China is, indeed, very miſerable at preſent; but this is not owing to their want of foreign

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gard to the command over the neceſſaries of life they would be in the ſame or rather worſe ſtate than before; and a great part of them would have exchanged the healthy labours of agriculture for the unhealthy occupations of manufacturing induſtry.

The argument perhaps appears clearer when applied to China, becauſe it is generally allowed, that its wealth has been long ſtationary, and its ſoil cultivated nearly to the utmoſt. With regard to any other country it might always be a matter of diſpute, at which of the two periods compared wealth was increaſing the faſteſt; as it is upon the rapidity of the increaſe of wealth at any particular period, that, Dr. Smith ſays, the condition of the poor depends. It is evident, however, that two nations might increaſe exactly with the ſame rapidity in the exchangeable value of the annual produce of their land and labour; yet, if one had applied itſelf chiefly to agriculture, and the other chiefly to com-

foreign commerce, but to their extreme tendency to marriage and increaſe; and if this tendency were to continue the ſame, the only way, in which the introduction of a greater number of manufacturers could poſſibly make the lower claſſes of people richer, would be by increaſing the mortality amongſt them, which is certainly not a very deſirable mode of growing rich.

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merce, the funds for the maintenance of labour, and conſequently the effect of the increaſe of wealth in each nation, would be extremely different. In that which had applied itſelf chiefly to agriculture the poor would live in greater plenty, and population would rapidly increaſe. In that which had applied itſelf chiefly to commerce, the poor would be comparatively but little benefitted, and conſequently population would either be ſtationary, or increaſe very ſlowly.[a]

[a] The condition of the labouring poor, ſuppoſing their habits to remain the ſame, cannot be very eſſentially improved but by giving them a greater command over the means of ſubſiſtence. But any advantage of this kind muſt from its nature be temporary, and is therefore really of leſs value to them than a permanent change in their habits. But manufactures, by inſpiring a taſte for comforts, tend to promote a favourable change in theſe habits; and in this way perhaps counterbalance all their diſadvantages. The labouring claſs of ſociety in nations merely agricultural are generally on the whole poorer than in manufacturing nations, though leſs ſubject to thoſe occaſional variations, which among manufacturers often produce the moſt ſevere diſtreſs. But the conſiderations, which relate to a change of habits in the poor, belong more properly to a ſubſequent part of this work.

CHAP.

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CHAP. VIII.

Of the Definitions of Wealth. Agricultural and Commercial Syſtems.

THERE are none of the definitions of the wealth of a ſtate, that are not liable to ſome objections. If we take the groſs produce of the land, it is evident, that the funds for the maintenance of labour, the population, and the wealth, may increaſe very rapidly, while the nation is apparently poor, and has very little diſpoſable revenue. If we take Dr. Smith's definition, wealth may increaſe, as has before been ſhown, without tending to increaſe the funds for the maintenance of labour and the population. If we take the clear ſurplus produce of the land, according to the Economiſts, in this caſe the funds for the maintenance of labour and the population may increaſe, without an increaſe of wealth, as in the inſtance of the cultivation of new lands, which will pay a profit but not a rent; and *vice verſa*, wealth may increaſe without increaſing the funds for the

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maintenance of labour and the population, as in the inſtance of improvements in agricultural inſtruments, and in the mode of agriculture, which may make the land yield the ſame produce, with fewer perſons employed upon it; and conſequently the diſpoſable wealth or revenue would be increaſed without a power of ſupporting a greater number of people.

The objections however to the two laſt definitions do not prove, that they are incorrect; but merely that an increaſe of wealth, though generally, is not neceſſarily and invariably accompanied by an increaſe of the funds for the maintenance of labour, and conſequently by the power of ſupporting a greater number of people, or of enabling the former number to live in greater plenty and happineſs.

Whichever of theſe two definitions is adopted as the beſt criterion of the wealth, power, and proſperity of a ſtate, it muſt always be true, that the ſurplus produce of the cultivators meaſures and limits the growth of that portion of the ſociety, which is not employed upon the land. Throughout the whole world the number of manufacturers, of proprietors, and of perſons engaged in the various civil and military profeſſions, muſt be exactly proportioned to this ſurplus produce,

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produce, and cannot in the nature of things increaſe beyond it. If the earth had been ſo niggardly of her produce, as to oblige all her inhabitants to labour for it, no manufacturers or idle perſons could ever have exiſted. But her firſt intercourſe with man was a voluntary preſent, not very large indeed, but ſufficient as a fund for his ſubſiſtence, till by the proper exerciſe of his faculties he could procure a greater. In proportion as the labour and ingenuity of man exerciſed upon the land have increaſed this ſurplus produce, leiſure has been given to a greater number of perſons to employ themſelves in all the inventions which embelliſh civilized life. And though, in its turn, the deſire to profit by theſe inventions, has greatly contributed to ſtimulate the cultivators to increaſe their ſurplus produce; yet the order of precedence is clearly the ſurplus produce; becauſe the funds for the ſubſiſtence of the manufacturer muſt be advanced to him, before he can complete his work: and if we were to imagine, that we could command this ſurplus produce, whenever we willed it, by forcing manufactures, we ſhould be quickly admoniſhed of our error, by the inadequate ſupport which the workman would receive, in ſpite of any riſe that might take place

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in his nominal wages. If, in aſſerting the peculiar productiveneſs of labour employed upon land, we look only to the clear monied rent yielded to a certain number of proprietors, we undoubtedly conſider the ſubject in a very contracted point of view. The quantity of the ſurplus produce of the cultivators is indeed in part meaſured by this clear rent, but its real value conſiſts in its affording the means of ſubſiſtence, and the materials of clothing and lodging, to a certain number of people, according to its extent; ſome of whom may live without manual exertions, and others employ themſelves in modifying the raw materials of nature into the forms beſt ſuited to the gratification of man.

A clear monied revenue, ariſing from manufactures, of the ſame extent, and to the ſame number of individuals, would by no means be accompanied by the ſame circumſtances. It would throw the country in which it exiſted into an abſolute dependance for food and materials on the ſurplus produce of other nations; and if this foreign ſupply were by any accident to fail, the revenue would immediately ceaſe.

The ſkill to modify the raw materials produced from the land would be abſolutely of no value,

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value, and the individuals poſſeſſing it would immediately periſh, if theſe raw materials, and the food neceſſary to ſupport thoſe who are working them up, could not be obtained; but if the materials and the food were ſecure, it would be eaſy to find the ſkill ſufficient to render them of conſiderable value.

According to the ſyſtem of the Economiſts, manufactures are an object on which revenue is ſpent, and not any part of the revenue itſelf.[a]

[a] This account of manufactures and revenue is not in my opinion correct; becauſe, if we meaſure the revenue of the whole ſtate by its whole conſumption, or even by the conſumption of thoſe who live upon ſurplus produce, manufactures evidently form a conſiderable part of it; and the raw produce alone would not be an adequate repreſentation either of its quantity, or of its value. But even upon this ſyſtem there is one point of view, in which manufactures appear greatly to add to the riches of a ſtate. The uſe of a revenue, according to the Economiſts, is to be ſpent; and a great part of it will of courſe be ſpent in manufactures. But if, by the judicious employment of manufacturing capital, theſe commodities grow conſiderably cheaper, the ſurplus produce becomes proportionably of ſo much greater value, and the real revenue of the nation is virtually increaſed. If this view of the ſubject do not, in the eyes of the Economiſts, completely juſtify Dr. Smith in calling manufacturing labour *productive*, in the ſtrict ſenſe of that term, it ought, even according to their own definition, fully to warrant all the pains he has taken in explaining the nature and effects of commercial capital, and of the diviſion of manufacturing labour.

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But though from this deſcription of manufactures, and the epithet ſterile ſometimes applied to them, they ſeem rather to be degraded by the terms of the Economiſts, it is a very great error to ſuppoſe, that their ſyſtem is really unfavourable to them. On the contrary, I am diſpoſed to believe, that it is only when commerce and manufactures follow agriculture, as in this ſyſtem, and do not precede it, that they can prevail to a very great extent, without bringing with them at the ſame time the ſeeds of their own ruin. Before the late revolution in Holland, the high price of the neceſſaries of life had deſtroyed many of its manufactures.[a] Monopolies are always ſubject to be broken; and even the advantage of capital and machinery, which may yield extraordinary profits for a time, is liable to be greatly leſſened by the competition of other nations. In the hiſtory of the world, the nations, whoſe wealth has been derived principally from manufactures and commerce, have been perfectly ephemeral beings, compared with thoſe, the baſis of whoſe wealth has been agriculture. It is in the nature of things, that a ſtate, the moſt eſſential part of whoſe revenue is furniſhed by other countries, muſt be infinitely

[a] Smith's Wealth of Nations, vol. iii, b. v, c. ii, p. 392.

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more expoſed to all the accidents of time and chance, than one which, in this important point, is independent.

No error is more frequent than that of miſtaking effects for cauſes. We are ſo blinded by the ſhowineſs of commerce and manufactures, as to believe, that they are almoſt the ſole cauſe of the wealth, power, and proſperity of England. But they certainly muſt be conſidered in a great degree as the conſequence, as well as the cauſe of this wealth. According to the definition of the Economiſts, which conſiders only the produce of land, England is the richeſt country in Europe in proportion to her ſize. Her ſyſtem of agriculture is beyond compariſon better, and conſequently her ſurplus produce is more conſiderable. France is very greatly ſuperior to England in extent of territory and population; but when the ſurplus produce, or diſpoſable revenue of the two nations is compared, the ſuperiority of France almoſt vaniſhes. And it is this great ſurplus produce in England, ariſing from her agriculture, which enables her to ſupport ſuch a vaſt body of manufacturers, ſuch formidable fleets and armies, ſuch a crowd of perſons engaged in the liberal profeſſions, and a proportion of the ſociety living on money rents very

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very far beyond what has ever been known in any other country of the world. According to the returns lately made of the population of England and Wales, it appears, that the number of perſons employed in agriculture is conſiderably leſs than a fifth part of the whole. There is reaſon to believe, that the claſſifications in theſe returns are incorrect; but making very great allowances for errors of this nature, it can ſcarcely admit of a doubt, that the number of perſons employed in agriculture is very unuſually ſmall in proportion to the actual produce. Of late years indeed the part of the ſociety not connected with agriculture has increaſed beyond this produce; but the average importation of corn, as yet, bears but a ſmall proportion to that which is grown in the country; and conſequently the power, which England poſſeſſes of ſupporting ſo vaſt a body of idle conſumers, muſt be attributed principally to the greatneſs of her ſurplus produce.

It will be ſaid, that it was her commerce and manufactures, which encouraged her cultivators to obtain this great ſurplus produce, and therefore indirectly, if not directly, created it. That commerce and manufactures produce this effect in a great degree is true; but that they

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ſometimes fail to produce it, when carried to exceſs, is equally true. Undoubtedly agriculture cannot flouriſh without a vent for its commodities, either at home or abroad; but when this want has been adequately ſupplied, the intereſts of agriculture demand nothing more. When too great a part of a nation is engaged in commerce and manufactures, it is a clear proof, that, either from undue encouragement, or from other particular cauſes, a capital is employed in this way to much greater advantage than in domeſtic agriculture; and under ſuch circumſtances, it is impoſſible, that the land ſhould not be robbed of much of the capital, which would naturally have fallen to its ſhare. Dr. Smith juſtly obſerves, that the navigation act, and the monopoly of the colony trade, neceſſarily forced into a particular and not very advantageous channel a greater proportion of the capital of Great Britain, than would otherwiſe have gone to it; and by thus taking capital from other employments, and at the ſame time univerſally raiſing the rate of Britiſh mercantile profit, diſcouraged the improvement of the land.[a] If the improvement of

[a] Wealth of Nations, vol. ii, b. iv, c. vii, p. 435.

land,

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land, he goes on to ſay, affords a greater capital than what can be drawn from an equal capital in any mercantile employment, the land will draw capital from mercantile employments. If the profit be leſs, mercantile employments will draw capital from the improvement of land. The monopoly therefore, by raiſing the rate of Britiſh mercantile profit, and thus diſcouraging agricultural improvement, has neceſſarily retarded the natural increaſe of a great original ſource of revenue, the rent of land.[a]

The Eaſt and Weſt Indies are indeed ſo great an object, and afford employment with high profits to ſo great a capital, that it is impoſſible, that they ſhould not draw capital from other employments, and particularly from the cultivation of the ſoil, the profits upon which in general are very ſmall.

All corporations, patents, and excluſive privileges of every kind, which abound ſo much in the mercantile ſyſtem, have in proportion to their extent the ſame effect. And the experience of the laſt twenty years ſeems to warrant us in concluding, that the high price of proviſions ariſing from the abundance of commercial wealth, accompanied as it has been by

[a] Wealth of Nations, vol, ii, b. iv, c. vii, p. 436.

very

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very great variations, and by a great rise in the price of labour, does not operate as an encouragement to agriculture sufficient to make it keep pace with the rapid strides of commerce.

It will be said perhaps, that land is always improved by the redundancy of commercial capital. But this effect is late and slow, and in the nature of things cannot operate powerfully, till this capital is really redundant, which it never is, while the interest of money and the profits of mercantile stock are high. We can not look forwards to any considerable effect of this kind, till the interest of money sinks to 3 per cent. When men can get 5 or 6 per cent for their money, without any trouble, they will hardly venture a capital upon land, where, including risks, and the profits upon their own labour and attendance, they may not get much more. Wars and loans, as far as internal circumstances are concerned, impede but little the progress of those branches of commerce, where the profits of stock are high; but affect very considerably the increase of that more essential and permanent source of wealth, the improvement of the land. It is in this point, I am inclined to believe, that the national debt of England has been most injurious to her. By absorbing

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abſorbing the redundancy of commercial capital, and keeping up the rate of intereſt, it has prevented this capital from overflowing upon the ſoil. And a large mortgage[a] has thus been eſtabliſhed

[a] The great practical error of the Economiſts appears to be on the ſubject of taxation; and this error does not neceſſarily flow from their confined and inadequate definition of wealth, but is a falſe inference from their own premiſes. Admitting that the ſurplus produce of the land is the fund, which pays every thing beſides the ſubſiſtence of the cultivators; yet it ſeems to be a miſtake to ſuppoſe, that the owners of land are the ſole proprietors of this ſurplus produce. Every man who has realized a capital in money has virtually a mortgage on the land for a certain portion of the ſurplus produce; and as long as the conditions of this mortgage remain unaltered (and the taxes, which affect him only in the character of a conſumer, do not alter theſe conditions) themortgagee pays a tax in the ſame manner as the landholder, finally. As conſumers indeed it cannot be doubted, that even thoſe who live upon the profits of ſtock and the wages of labour, particularly of profeſſional labour, pay ſome taxes on neceſſaries for a very conſiderable time, and thoſe on luxuries permanently; becauſe the conſumption of individuals, who poſſeſs large ſhares of the wealth which is paid in profits and wages, may be curtailed and turned into another channel, without impeding, in any degree, the continuance of the ſame quantity of ſtock, or the production of the ſame quantity of labour.

The real ſurplus produce of this country, or all the produce not actually conſumed by the cultivators, is a very different thing, and ſhould carefully be diſtinguiſhed from the ſum of the

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eſtabliſhed on the lands of England, the intereſt of which is drawn from the payment of productive

the net rents of the landlords. This ſum, it is ſuppoſed, does not much exceed a fifth part of the groſs produce. The remaining four fifths are certainly not conſumed by the labourers and horſes employed in agriculture; but a very conſiderable portion of them is paid by the farmer in tithes, in taxes, in the inſtruments of agriculture, and in the manufactures uſed in his own family, and in the families of his labourers. It is in this manner, that a kind of mortgage is ultimately eſtabliſhed on the land, by taxes, and the progreſs of commercial wealth; and in this ſenſe, all taxes may be ſaid to fall upon the land, though not on the landholders. It ſeems a little hard therefore, in taxing ſurplus produce, to make the landlords pay for what they do not receive. At the ſame time it muſt be confeſſed, that independently of theſe conſiderations, which makes a land tax partial, it is the beſt of all taxes, as it is the only one which does not tend to raiſe the price of commodities. Taxes on conſumption, by which alone monied revenues can be reached, without an income tax, neceſſarily raiſe all prices to a degree greatly injurious to a country.

A land tax, or tax upon net rent, has little or no effect in diſcouraging the improvement of land, as many have ſuppoſed. It is only a tithe, or a tax in proportion to the groſs produce, which does this. No man in his ſenſes will be deterred from getting a clear profit of 20l. inſtead of 10l. becauſe he is always to pay a fourth or fifth of his clear gains; but when he is to pay a tax in proportion to his groſs produce, which in the caſe of capital laid out in improvements is ſcarcely ever accompanied with a proportional increaſe of his clear gains, it is a very different thing, and muſt neceſſarily impede,

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tive labour, and dedicated to the ſupport of idle conſumers.

It muſt be allowed therefore, upon the whole, that our commerce has not done more for our agriculture, than our agriculture has for our commerce; and that the improved ſyſtem of cultivation, which has taken place in ſpite of conſiderable diſcouragements, creates yearly a ſurplus produce, which enables the country, with but little aſſiſtance, to ſupport ſo vaſt a body of people engaged in purſuits unconnected with the land.

impede, in a great degree, the progreſs of cultivation. I am aſtoniſhed, that ſo obvious and eaſy a commutation for tithes as a land tax on improved rents has not been adopted. Such a tax would be paid by the ſame perſons as before, only in a better form; and the change would not be felt, except in the advantage that would accrue to all the parties concerned, the landlord, the tenant, and the clergyman. Tithes undoubtedly operate as a high bounty on paſture, and a great diſcouragement to tillage, which in the preſent peculiar circumſtances of the country is a very great diſadvantage.

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CHAP. IX.

Different Effects of the Agricultural and Commercial Syſtems.

About the middle of the laſt century we were genuinely an agricultural nation. Our commerce and manufactures were however then in a very reſpectable and thriving ſtate; and if they had continued to bear the ſame relative proportion to our agriculture, they would evidently have gone on increaſing conſtantly with the improving cultivation of the country. There is no apparent limit to the quantity of manufactures, which might in time be ſupported in this way. The increaſing wealth of a country in ſuch a ſtate ſeems to be out of the reach of all common accidents. There is no diſcoverable germ of decay in the ſyſtem; and in theory there is no reaſon to ſay, that it might not go on increaſing in wealth and proſperity for thouſands of years.

We have now however ſtepped out of the

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agricultural ſyſtem, into a ſtate in which the commercial ſyſtem clearly predominates; and there is but too much reaſon to fear, that even our commerce and manufactures will ultimately feel the diſadvantage of the change. It has been already obſerved, that we are exactly in the ſituation, in which a country feels moſt fully the effect of thoſe common years of deficient crops, which in the natural courſe of things are to be expected. The competition of increaſing commercial wealth, operating upon a ſupply of corn not increaſing in the ſame proportion, muſt at all times tend to raiſe the nominal price of labour; but when ſcarce years are taken into the conſideration, its effect in this way muſt ultimately be very great. During the late ſcarcities the price of labour has been continually riſing, and it will not readily fall again. In every country there will be many cauſes, which, in practice, operating like friction in mechanics, prevent the price of labour from riſing and falling exactly in proportion to the price of its component parts. But beſides theſe cauſes, there is one very powerful cauſe in theory, which operates to prevent the price of labour from falling when once it has been raiſed. Suppoſing it to be raiſed by a temporary cauſe, ſuch

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ſuch as a ſcarcity of proviſions, it is evident, that it will not fall again, unleſs ſome kind of ſtagnation take place in the competition among the purchaſers of labour; but the power which the increaſe of the real price of labour, on the return of plenty, gives to the labourer of purchaſing a greater quantity both of rude and manufactured produce, tends to prevent this ſtagnation, and ſtrongly to counteract that fall in the price, which would otherwiſe take place.

Labour is a commodity, the price of which will not be ſo readily affected by the price of its component parts as any other. The reaſon why the conſumer pays a tax on any commodity, or an advance in the price of any of its component parts, is, becauſe if he cannot or will not pay this advance of price, the commodity will not be produced in the ſame quantity, and the next year there will be only ſuch a proportion in the market, as is accommodated to the number of perſons that will conſent to pay the advance. But in the caſe of labour, the operation of withdrawing the commodity is much ſlower and more painful. Although the purchaſers refuſe to pay the advanced price, the ſame ſupply will neceſſarily remain in the market, not only the next year, but for ſome

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years to come. Conſequently, if no increaſe take place in the demand, and the tax or advance in the price of proviſions be not ſo great, as to make it immediately obvious that the labourer cannot ſupport his family, it is probable, that he will continue to pay this advance, till a relaxation in the rate of the increaſe of population cauſes the market to be under ſupplied with labour, and then of courſe the competition among the purchaſers will raiſe the price above the proportion of the advance, in order to reſtore the neceſſary ſupply. In the ſame manner if an advance in the price of labour take place during two or three years of ſcarcity, it is probable, that on the return of plenty the real recompenſe of labour will continue higher than the uſual average, till a too rapid increaſe of population cauſes a competition among the labourers, and a conſequent diminution of the price of labour below the uſual rate.

When a country in average years grows more corn than it conſumes, and is in the habit of exporting a part of it, thoſe great variations of price, which from the competition of commercial wealth often produce laſting effects, cannot occur to the ſame extent. The wages of labour can never riſe very much above the common

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mon price in other commercial countries; and under ſuch circumſtances, England would have nothing to fear from the fulleſt and moſt open competition. The increaſing proſperity of other countries would only open to her a more extenſive market for her commodities, and give additional ſpirit to all her commercial tranſactions.

The high price of corn and of rude produce in general, as far as it is occaſioned by the freeſt competition among the nations of Europe, is a very great advantage, and is the beſt poſſible encouragement to agriculture; but when occaſioned merely by the competition of monied wealth at home, its effect is different. In the one caſe, a great encouragement is given to production in general, and the more is produced the better. In the other caſe, the produce is neceſſarily confined to the home conſumption. The cultivators are juſtly afraid of growing too much corn, as a conſiderable loſs will be ſuſtained upon that part of it which is ſold abroad; and a glut in the home market will univerſally make the price fall below the fair and proper recompenſe to the grower. It is impoſſible, that a country under ſuch circumſtances ſhould not

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be ſubject to great and frequent variations in the price of corn.

If we were to endeavour to lower the price of labour by encouraging the importation of foreign corn, we ſhould probably aggravate the evil tenfold. Experience warrants us in ſaying, that the fall in the price of labour would be ſlow and uncertain; but the decline of our agriculture would be certain. The Britiſh grower of corn could not, in his own markets, ſtand the competition of the foreign grower, in average years. Arable lands of a moderate quality would hardly pay the expenſe of cultivation. Rich ſoils alone would yield a rent. Round all our towns the appearances would be the ſame as uſual; but in the interior of the country, much of the land would be neglected, and almoſt univerſally, where it was practicable, paſture would take place of tillage. This ſtate of things would continue, till the equilibrium was reſtored, either by the fall of Britiſh rent and wages, or an advance in the price of foreign corn, or, what is more probable, by the union of both cauſes. But a period would have elapſed of conſiderable relative encouragement to manufactures, and relative diſcouragement to agriculture;

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culture; a certain portion of capital would be taken from the land; and when the equilibrium was at length reſtored, the nation would probably be found dependant upon foreign ſupplies for a great portion of her ſubſiſtence; and unleſs ſome particular cauſe were to occaſion a foreign demand greater than the home demand, her independence, in this reſpect, could not be recovered. During this period even her commerce and manufactures would be in a moſt precarious ſtate; and circumſtances by no means improbable in the preſent ſtate of Europe might reduce her population within the limits of her reduced cultivation.[a]

In the natural courſe of things, a country,

[a] Though it be true, that the high price of labour or taxes on agricultural capital ultimately fall on the rent, yet we muſt by no means throw out of our conſideration the current leaſes. In the courſe of twenty years, I am inclined to believe, that the ſtate of agriculture in any country might be very flouriſhing, or very much the reverſe, according as the current leaſes had tended to encourage or diſcourage improvement. A general fall in the rent of land would be preceded by a period moſt unfavourable to the inveſtment of agricultural capital; and conſequently every tax which affects agricultural capital is peculiarly pernicious. Taxes which affect capitals in trade are almoſt immediately ſhifted off on the conſumer; but taxes which affect agricultural capital fall, during the current leaſes, wholly on the farmer.

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which depends for a conſiderable part of its ſupply of corn upon its poorer neighbours, may expect to ſee this ſupply gradually diminiſh, as theſe countries increaſe in riches and population, and have leſs ſurplus of their rude produce to ſpare.

The political relations of ſuch a country may expoſe it, during a war, to have that part of its ſupplies of proviſions, which it derives from foreign ſtates, ſuddenly ſtopped, or greatly diminiſhed; an event which could not take place without producing the moſt calamitous effects.

A nation in which commercial wealth predominates has an abundance of all thoſe articles, which form the principal conſumption of the rich, but is expoſed to be ſtraightened in its ſupplies of that article, which is abſolutely neceſſary to all, and in which by far the greateſt portion of the revenue of the induſtrious claſſes is expended.

A nation in which agricultural wealth predominates, though it may not produce at home ſuch a ſurplus of luxuries and conveniences as the commercial nation, and may therefore be expoſed poſſibly to ſome want of theſe commodities, has, on the other hand, a ſurplus of that article, which is eſſential to the well being of

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the whole ſtate, and is therefore ſecure from want in what is of the greateſt importance.

And if we cannot be ſo ſure of the ſupply of what we derive from others, as of what we produce at home, it ſeems to be an advantageous policy in a nation, whoſe territory will allow of it, to ſecure a ſurplus of that commodity, a deficiency of which would ſtrike moſt deeply at its happineſs and proſperity.

It has been almoſt univerſally acknowledged, that there is no branch of trade more profitable to a country, even in a commercial point of view, than the ſale of rude produce. In general its value bears a much greater proportion to the expenſe incurred in procuring it, than that of any other commodity whatever, and the national profit on its ſale is in conſequence greater. This is often noticed by Dr. Smith; but in combating the arguments of the Economiſts, he ſeems for a moment to forget it, and to ſpeak of the ſuperior advantage of exporting manufactures.

He obſerves, that a trading and manufacturing country exports what can ſubſiſt and accommodate but very few, and imports the ſubſiſtence and accommodation of a great number. The other exports the ſubſiſtence and accommodation

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modation of a great number, and imports that of a very few only. The inhabitants of the one muſt always enjoy a much greater quantity of ſubſiſtence than what their own lands in the actual ſtate of their cultivation could afford. The inhabitants of the other muſt always enjoy a much ſmaller quantity.[a]

In this paſſage he does not ſeem to argue with his uſual accuracy. Though the manufacturing nation may export a commodity, which, in its actual ſhape, can only ſubſiſt and accommodate a very few; yet it muſt be recollected, that in order to prepare this commodity for exportation, a conſiderable part of the revenue of the country had been employed in ſubſiſting and accommodating a great number of workmen. And with regard to the ſubſiſtence and accommodation which the other nation exports, whether it be of a great or a ſmall number, it is certainly no more than ſufficient to replace the ſubſiſtence, that had been conſumed in the manufacturing nation, together with the profits of the maſter manufacturer and merchant, which, probably, are not ſo great as the profits of the farmer and the merchant in the agricultural nation. And though it may be true, that the

[a] Wealth of Nations, vol. iii, b. iv, c. ix, p. 27.

inhabitants

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inhabitants of the manufacturing nation enjoy a greater quantity of ſubſiſtence, than what their own lands in the actual ſtate of their cultivation could afford; yet an inference in favour of the manufacturing ſyſtem by no means follows, becauſe the adoption of the one or the other ſyſtem will make the greateſt difference in their actual ſtate of cultivation. If, during the courſe of a century, two landed nations were to purſue theſe two different ſyſtems, that is, if one of them were regularly to export manufactures, and import ſubſiſtence; and the other to export ſubſiſtence, and import manufactures, there would be no compariſon at the end of the period between the ſtate of cultivation in the two countries; and no doubt could rationally be entertained, that the country, which exported its raw produce, would be able to ſubſiſt and accommodate a much greater population than the other.

In the ordinary courſe of things, the exportation of corn is ſufficiently profitable to the individuals concerned in it. But with regard to national advantage, there are four very ſtrong reaſons, why it is to be preferred to any other kind of export. In the firſt place, corn pays from its own funds the expenſes of procuring it,

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it, and the whole of what is ſold is a clear national profit. If I ſet up a new manufacture, the perſons employed in it muſt be ſupported out of the funds of ſubſiſtence already exiſting in the country, the value of which muſt be deducted from the price for which the commodity is ſold, before we can eſtimate the clear national profit. But if I cultivate freſh land, or employ more men in the improvement of what was before cultivated, I increaſe the general funds of ſubſiſtence in the country. With a part of this increaſe I ſupport all the additional perſons employed, and the whole of the remainder, which is exported and ſold, is a clear national gain; beſides the advantage to the country of ſupporting an additional population equal to the additional number of perſons ſo employed, without the ſlighteſt tendency to diminiſh the plenty of the reſt.

Secondly, in all wrought commodities, the ſame quantity of capital, ſkill, and labour, employed, will produce the ſame or very nearly the ſame quantity of complete manufacture. But owing to the variations of the ſeaſons, the ſame quantity of capital, ſkill, and labour in huſbandry may produce in different years very different quantities of corn. Conſequently, if the two commodities

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commodities were equally valuable to man, from the greater probability of the occaſional failure of corn than of manufactures, it would be of more conſequence to have an average ſurplus of the former than of the latter.

Thirdly, corn being an article of the moſt abſolutely neceſſity, in compariſon with which all others will be ſacrificed, a deficiency of it muſt neceſſarily produce a much greater advance of price, than a deficiency of any other kind of produce; and as the price of corn influences the price of ſo many other commodities, the evil effects of a deficiency will not only be more ſevere and more general, but more laſting, than the effects of a deficiency in any other commodity.

Fourthly, there appear to be but three ways of rendering the ſupplies of corn in a particular country more equable, and of preventing the evil effects of thoſe deficiences from unfavourable ſeaſons, which in the natural courſe of things muſt be expected occaſionally to recur. Theſe are, 1. An immediate ſupply from foreign nations, as ſoon as the ſcarcity occurs. 2. Large public granaries. 3. The habitual growth of a quantity of corn for a more extended market

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than the average home conſumption affords.[a] Of the firſt, experience has convinced us, that the ſuddenneſs of the demand prevents it from being effectual. To the ſecond, it is acknowledged by all, that there are very great and weighty objections. There remains then only the third.

Theſe conſiderations ſeem to make it a point of the firſt conſequence to the happineſs and permanent proſperity of any country, to be able to carry on the export trade of corn as one conſiderable branch of its commercial tranſactions.

But how to give this ability, how to turn a nation from the habit of importing corn to the habit of exporting it, is the great difficulty. It has been generally acknowledged, and is frequently noticed by Dr. Smith, that the policy of modern Europe has led it to encourage the induſtry of the towns more than the induſtry of the country, or, in other words, trade more

[a] A plan has lately been ſuggeſted in Mr. Oddy's European Commerce (page 511), of making this country an entrepôt of foreign grain, to be opened only for internal ſale, when corn is above the importation price, whatever that may be. To this plan, if it can be executed, I ſee no objection; and it certainly deſerves attention. It would not interfere with the home growth of corn, and would be a good proviſion againſt years of ſcarcity.

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than agriculture. In this policy, England has certainly not been behind the reſt of Europe; perhaps indeed, except in one inſtance,[b] it may be ſaid that ſhe has been the foremoſt. If things had been left to take their natural courſe, there is no reaſon to think, that the commercial part of the ſociety would have increaſed beyond the ſurplus produce of the cultivators; but the high profits of commerce from monopolies, and other peculiar encouragements, have altered this natural courſe of things; and the body politic is in an artificial, and in ſome degree diſeaſed ſtate, with one of its principal members out of proportion to the reſt. Almoſt all medicine is in itſelf bad; and one of the great evils of illneſs is the neceſſity of taking it. No perſon can well be more averſe to medicine in the animal economy, or a ſyſtem of expedients in political economy, than myſelf; but in the preſent ſtate of the country ſomething of the kind may be neceſſary, to prevent greater evils. It is a matter of very little comparative importance, whether we are fully ſupplied with broadcloth, linens, and muſlins, or even with tea, ſugar, and coffee; and no rational politician therefore would

[b] The bounty on the exportation of corn.

think

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think of propoſing a bounty upon ſuch commodities. But it is certainly a matter of the very higheſt importance, whether we are fully ſupplied with food; and if a bounty would produce ſuch a ſupply, the moſt liberal political economiſt might be juſtified in propoſing it; conſidering food as a commodity diſtinct from all others, and preeminently valuable.

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CHAP. X.

Of Bounties on the Exportation of Corn.

In diſcuſſing the policy of a bounty on the exportation of corn, it ſhould be premiſed, that the private intereſts of the farmers and proprietors, ſhould never enter into the queſtion. The ſole object of our conſideration ought to be the permanent intereſt of the conſumer, in the character of which is comprehended the whole nation.

According to the general principles of political economy, it cannot be doubted, that it is for the intereſt of the civilized world, that each nation ſhould purchaſe its commodities wherever they could be had the cheapeſt.

; to theſe principles, it is rather deſome obſtacles ſhould exiſt to the accumulation of wealth in any parhoarry; and that rich nations ſhould be purchaſe their corn of poorer naby theſe means the wealth of the civi-

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lized world will not only be more rapidly increaſed, but more equably diffuſed.

It is evident, however, that local intereſts and political relations may modify the application of theſe general principles; and in a country with a territory fit for the production of corn, an independent, and at the ſame time a more equable ſupply of this neceſſary of life, may be an object of ſuch importance, as to warrant a deviation from them.

It is undoubtedly true, that every thing will ultimately find its level, but this level is ſometimes effected in a very harſh manner. England may export corn a hundred years hence without the aſſiſtance of a bounty; but this is much more likely to happen from the deſtruction of her manufactures, than from the increaſe of her agriculture; and a policy, which in ſo important a point may tend to ſoften the harſh corrections of general laws, ſeems to be juſtifiable.

The regulations reſpecting importation and exportation adopted in the corn laws, that were eſtabliſhed in 1688 and 1700, ſeemed to have the effect of giving that encouragement to agriculture, which it ſo much wanted; at leaſt they

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they were followed by a growth of corn in the country conſiderably above the wants of the actual population, by a lower average price, and by a ſteadineſs of prices, that had never been experienced before.

During the ſeventeenth century, and indeed the whole period of our hiſtory previous to it, the prices of wheat were ſubject to great fluctuations, and the average price was very high. For ſixty three years before the year 1700, the average price of wheat per quarter was, according to Dr. Smith, 2l. 11s. $0\frac{1}{3}$d., and for five years before 1650, it was 3l. 12s. 8d. From the time of the completion of the corn laws in 1700 and 1706, the prices became extraordinarily ſteady; and the average price for forty years, previous to the year 1750, ſunk ſo low as 1l. 16s. per quarter. This was the period of our greateſt exportations. In the year 1757, the laws were ſuſpended, and in the year 1773 they were totally altered. The exports of corn have ſince been regularly decreaſing, and the imports increaſing. The average price of wheat for the forty years ending in 1800, was 2l. 9s. 5d; and for the laſt five years of this period, 3l. 6s. 6d. During this laſt term, the balance of the imports of all ſorts of grain is

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eſtimated at 2,938,357.[a] and the dreadful fluctuations of price, which have occurred of late years, we are but too well acquainted with.

It is at all times dangerous, to be haſty in drawing general inferences from partial experience: but, in the preſent inſtance, the period that has been conſidered is of ſo conſiderable an extent; and the changes from fluctuating and high prices to ſteady and low prices, with a return to fluctuating and high prices again, correſpond ſo accurately with the eſtabliſhment and full vigour of the corn laws, and with their ſubſequent alterations and inefficacy; that it was certainly rather a bold aſſertion in Dr. Smith to ſay, that the fall in the price of corn muſt have happened in ſpite of the bounty, and could not poſſibly have happened in conſequence of it.[b] From a view of the facts, it does not at any rate ſeem probable, that the cauſes, whatever they may be, which have produced this effect, ſhould have been continually impeded by the laws in queſtion; and we have a right to expect, that he ſhould defend a poſition ſo contrary to appearances, by the moſt powerful arguments.

[a] Anderſon's Inveſtigation of the Circumſtances which led to Scarcity, Table, p. 40.

[b] Wealth of Nations, vol. ii, b. iv, c. v, p. 264.

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As in the preſent ſtate of this country the ſubject ſeems to be of the higheſt importance, it will be worth while to examine the validity of theſe arguments.

He obſerves, that both in years of plenty, and in years of ſcarcity, the bounty neceſſarily tends to raiſe the money price of corn ſomewhat higher, than it otherwiſe would be in the home market.[a]

That it does ſo in years of plenty is undoubtedly true; but that it does ſo in years of ſcarcity appears to me as undoubtedly falſe. The only argument by which Dr. Smith ſupports this latter poſition is, by ſaying, that the exportation prevents the plenty of one year from relieving the ſcarcity of another. But this is certainly a very inſufficient reaſon. The ſcarce year may not immediately follow the moſt plentiful year; and it is totally contrary to the habits and practice of farmers, to ſave the ſuperfluity of ſix or ſeven years for a contingency of this kind. Great practical inconveniencies generally attend the keeping of ſo large a reſerved ſtore. Difficulties often occur from a want of proper accommodations for it. It is at all times liable to damage from vermin and other cauſes. When

[a] Wealth of Nations, vol. ii, b. iv, c. v, p. 265.

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very large, it is apt to be viewed with a jealous and grudging eye by the common people. And, in general, the farmer may either not be able to remain ſo long without his returns; or may not be willing to employ ſo conſiderable a capital in a way, in which the returns muſt neceſſarily be diſtant and precarious. On the whole, therefore, we cannot reaſonably expect, that, upon this plan, the reſerved ſtore ſhould in any degree be equal to that, which in a ſcarce year would be kept at home, in a country which was in the habit of conſtant exportation to a conſiderable amount; and we know, that even a very little difference in the degree of deficiency will often make a very great difference in the price.

Dr. Smith then proceeds to ſtate very juſtly, that the defenders of the corn laws do not inſiſt ſo much upon the price of corn in the actual ſtate of tillage, as upon their tendency to improve this actual ſtate, by opening a more extenſive foreign market to the corn of the farmer, and ſecuring to him a better price than he could otherwiſe expect for his commodity; which double encouragement, they imagine, muſt in a long period of years occaſion ſuch an increaſe in the production of corn, as may lower

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its price in the home market much more than the bounty can raiſe it, in the ſtate of tillage then actually exiſting.[a]

In anſwer to this he obſerves, that whatever extenſion of the foreign market can be occaſioned by the bounty, muſt in every particular year be altogether at the expenſe of the home market, as every buſhel of corn which is exported by means of the bounty, and which would not have been exported without the bounty, would have remained in the home market to increaſe the conſumption, and to lower the price of that commodity.

In this obſervation he appears to me a little to miſuſe the term market. Becauſe, by ſelling a commodity below what he calls its natural price, it is poſſible to get rid of a greater quantity of it, in any particular market, than would have gone off otherwiſe, it cannot juſtly be ſaid, that by this proceſs ſuch a market is proportionally extended. Though the removal of the two taxes mentioned by Dr. Smith, as paid on account of the bounty, would certainly rather increaſe the power of the lower claſſes to purchaſe; yet in each particular year the conſumption muſt be ultimately limited by the population; and the increaſe of conſumption from

[a] Wealth of Nations, vol. ii, b. iv, c. v, p. 265.

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the removal of theſe taxes might by no means be ſufficient, to take off the whole ſuperfluity of the farmers, without lowering the general price of corn, ſo as to deprive them of their fair recompenſe. If the price of Britiſh corn in the home market riſe in conſequence of the bounty, it is an unanſwerable proof, that the effectual market for Britiſh corn is extended by it; and that the diminution of demand at home, whatever it may be, is more than counterbalanced by the extenſion of the demand abroad.

There cannot be a greater diſcouragement to the production of any commodity in a large quantity, than the fear of overſtocking the market with it. Nor can there be a greater encouragement to ſuch a production, than the certainty of finding an effectual market for any quantity, however great, that can be obtained. It ſhould be obſerved further, that one of the principal objects of the bounty is to obtain a ſurplus above the home conſumption, which may ſupply the deficiency of unfavourable years; but it is evident, that no poſſible extenſion of the home market can attain this object.

Dr. Smith goes on to ſay, that, if the two taxes paid by the people on account of the bounty, namely, the one to the government to pay this bounty, and the other paid in the advanced

vanced price of the commodity, do not, in the actual ſtate of the crop, raiſe the price of labour, and thus return upon the farmer; they muſt reduce the ability of the labouring poor to bring up their children, and, by thus reſtraining the population and induſtry of the country, muſt tend to ſtunt and reſtrain the gradual extenſion of the home market, and thereby, in the long run, rather to diminiſh, than to augment, the whole market and conſumption of corn.[a]

I think it has been ſhown, and indeed it will ſcarcely admit of a doubt, that the ſyſtem of exportation ariſing from the bounty has an evident tendency in years of ſcarcity to increaſe the ſupplies of corn; or to prevent their being ſo much diminiſhed as they otherwiſe would be, which comes to the ſame thing. Conſequently the labouring poor will be able to live better, and the population will be leſs checked in theſe particular years, than they would have been without the ſyſtem of exportation ariſing from the bounty. But if the effect of the bounty, in this view of the ſubject, be only to repreſs a little the population in years of plenty, while it encourages it comparatively in years of ſcarcity;

[a] Wealth of Nations, vol. ii, b. iv, c. v, p. 267.

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its effect is evidently to regulate the population more equally according to that quantity of ſubſiſtence, which can permanently, and without occaſional defalcations, be ſupplied. And this effect, I have no heſitation in ſaying, is one of the greateſt advantages, which can poſſibly occur to a ſociety; and contributes more to the happineſs of the labouring poor, than can eaſily be conceived by thoſe, who have not deeply conſidered the ſubject. In the whole compaſs of human events, I doubt if there be a more fruitful ſource of miſery, or one more invariably productive of diſaſtrous conſequences, than a ſudden ſtart of population from two or three years of plenty, which muſt neceſſarily be repreſſed on the firſt return of ſcarcity, or even of average crops. It has been ſuggeſted, that, if we were in the habit of exporting corn in conſequence of a bounty, the price would fall ſtill lower in years of extraordinary abundance, than without ſuch a bounty and ſuch exportation; becauſe the exuberance belonging to that part of the crop uſually exported would fall upon the home market. But there ſeems to be no reaſon for ſuppoſing, that this would be the caſe. The quantity annually exported would by no means be fixed, but would depend upon the ſtate of the

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the crop, and the demands of the home market. One great advantage of a foreign market, both with regard to buying and ſelling, is the improbability, that years of ſcarcity, or years of abundance, ſhould in many different countries occur at the ſame time. In a year of abundance the fixed ſum of the bounty would always bear a greater proportion to the coſt of production. A greater encouragement would therefore be given to export, and a very moderate lowering of price would probably enable the farmer, to diſpoſe of the whole of his exceſs in foreign markets.

The moſt plauſible argument that Dr. Smith adduces againſt the corn laws is, that, as the money price of corn regulates that of all other home-made commodities, the advantage to the proprietor from the increaſed money price is merely apparent, and not real; ſince what he gains in his ſales, he muſt loſe in his purchaſes.[a]

This poſition, however, is not true, without many limitations. The money price of corn in a particular country is undoubtedly by far the moſt powerful ingredient in regulating the price of labour, and of all other commodities; but it is not enough for Dr. Smith's poſition,

[a] Wealth of Nations, vol. ii, b. iv, c. v, p. 269.

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that it ſhould be the moſt powerful ingredient; it muſt be ſhown, that, other cauſes remaining the ſame, the price of every article will riſe and fall exactly in proportion to the price of corn; and this does not appear to be the caſe. Dr. Smith himſelf excepts all foreign commodities; but when we reflect upon the ſum of our imports, and the quantity of foreign articles uſed in our manufactures, this exception alone is of very great importance. Wool and raw hides, two moſt important materials of home growth, do not, according to Dr. Smith's own reaſonings, (Book i, c. xi, p. 363 et ſeq.) depend much upon the price of corn and the rent of land; and the price of flax is of courſe greatly influenced by the quantity we import. But woollen cloths, leather, linen, cottons, tea, ſugar, &c., which are comprehended in the above-named articles, form almoſt the whole of the clothing and luxuries of the induſtrious claſſes of ſociety. Conſequently, although that part of the wages of labour, which is expended in food, will riſe in proportion to the price of corn, the whole of the wages will not riſe in the ſame proportion. When great improvements in manufacturing machinery have taken place in any country, that part of the price of the

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the wrought commodity, which pays the intereſt of the fixed capital employed in producing it, as this capital had been accumulated before the advance in the price of labour, will not riſe in conſequence of this advance, except as it requires gradual renovation. And in the caſe of great and numerous taxes on conſumption, as thoſe who live by the wages of labour muſt always receive wherewithal to pay them, at leaſt all thoſe upon neceſſaries, a riſe or fall in the price of corn, though it would increaſe or decreaſe that part of the wages of labour which reſolves itſelf into food, evidently would not increaſe or decreaſe that part, which was deſtined for the payment of taxes.

It cannot then be admitted as a general poſition, that the money price of corn in any country is an accurate meaſure of the real value of ſilver in that country. But all theſe conſiderations, though of great weight to the owners of land, will not influence the growth of corn beyond the current leaſes. At the expiration of a leaſe, any particular advantage, which the farmer had received from a favourable proportion between the price of corn and of labour, would be taken from him, and any diſadvantage from an unfavourable proportion made up to him. The

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ſole cauſe, which would determine the quantity of effective capital employed in agriculture, would be the extent of the effectual demand for corn; and if the bounty had really enlarged this demand, which it certainly would have done, it is impoſſible to ſuppoſe, that more capital would not be employed upon the land.

When Dr. Smith ſays, that the nature of things has ſtamped upon corn a real value, which cannot be altered by merely altering the money price; and that no bounty upon exportation, no monopoly of the home market, can raiſe that value, nor the freeſt competition lower it;[a] it is evident, that he changes the queſtion from the profits of the growers of corn or the proprietors of land, to the phyſical and abſolute value of corn in itſelf. I certainly do not mean to ſay, that the bounty alters the phyſical value of corn, and makes a buſhel of it ſupport a greater number of labourers for a day than it did before; but I certainly do mean to ſay, that the bounty to the Britiſh cultivator does, in the actual ſtate of things, really increaſe the demand for Britiſh corn; and thus encourages him to ſow more than he otherwiſe would do, and enables him in conſequence to employ

[a] Wealth of Nations, vol. ii, b. iv, c. v, p. 278.

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more buſhels of corn in the maintenance of a greater number of labourers.

If Dr. Smith's theory were ſtrictly true, and the real price of corn, or its price in the ſum of all other commodities, never ſuffered any variation, it would be difficult to give a reaſon why we grow more corn now than we did 200 years ago. If no riſe in the nominal price of corn were a real riſe, or could enable the farmer to cultivate better, or determine more of the national capital to the land, it would appear, that agriculture was indeed in a moſt unfortunate ſituation, and that no adequate motive could exiſt to the further inveſtment of capital in this branch of induſtry. But ſurely we cannot doubt, that the real price of corn varies, though it may not vary ſo much as the real price of other commodities; and that there are periods when all wrought commodities are cheaper, and periods when they are dearer, in proportion to the price of corn: and in the one caſe capital flows from manufactures to agriculture, and in the other from agriculture to manufactures. To overlook theſe periods, or conſider them of ſlight importance, is unpardonable, becauſe in every branch of trade theſe periods form the grand encouragement to an increaſe of ſupply. Undoubtedly the profits

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profits of trade in any particular branch of induſtry can never long remain higher than in others; but how are they lowered, except by influx of capital occaſioned by theſe high profits? It never can be a national object permanently to increaſe the profits of any particular ſet of dealers. The national object is the increaſe of ſupply; but this object cannot be attained but by previouſly increaſing the profits of theſe dealers, and thus determining a greater quantity of capital to this particular employment. The ſhip-owners and ſailors do not make greater profits now, than they did before the navigation act: but the object of the nation was not to increaſe the profits of ſhip-owners and ſailors, but the quantity of ſhipping and ſeamen; and this could not be done but by a law, which, by increaſing the demand for them, raiſed the profits of the capital before employed in this way, and determined a greater quantity to flow into the ſame channel. The object of the nation in the corn laws is not the increaſe of the profits of the farmers, or the rents of the landlords; but the determination of a greater quantity of the national capital to the land, and the conſequent increaſe of ſupply: and though in the caſe of an advance in the price of corn

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from an increaſed demand, the riſe of wages, the riſe of rents, and the fall of ſilver, tend to obſcure in ſome degree our view of the ſubject; yet we cannot refuſe to acknowledge, that the real price of corn varies during periods ſufficiently long to affect the determination of capital, or we ſhall be reduced to the dilemma of owning, that no motive can exiſt to the further inveſtment of capital in the production of corn.

The mode in which a bounty upon the exportation of corn operates ſeems to be this. Let us ſuppoſe, that the price at which the Britiſh grower can afford to ſell his corn in average years is 55 ſhillings, and the price at which the foreign grower can ſell it, 53 ſhillings. Thus circumſtanced, it is evident, that the Britiſh grower cannot export corn even in years conſiderably above an average crop. In this ſtate of things let a bounty of five ſhillings per quarter be granted on exported corn. Immediately as this bounty was eſtabliſhed the exportation would begin, and go on, till the price in the home market had riſen to the price at which Britiſh corn could be ſold abroad with the addition of the bounty. The abſtraction of a part of the home ſupply, or even the apprehenſion of it, would ſoon raiſe the price in the

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home market; and it is probable that the quantity exported before this riſe had taken place would not, at the moſt, bear ſuch a proportion to the whole quantity in the ports of Europe, as to lower the general price more than a ſhilling in the quarter. Conſequently the Britiſh grower would ſell his corn abroad for 52 ſhillings, which with the addition of the bounty would be 57 ſhillings, and what was ſold at home would bear exactly the ſame price, throwing out of our conſideration at preſent the expences of freight, &c. The Britiſh grower therefore, inſtead of 55 ſhillings at which he could afford to ſell, would get 57 ſhillings for his whole crop. Dr. Smith has ſuppoſed, that a bounty of five ſhillings would raiſe the price of corn in the home market four ſhillings; but this is evidently upon the ſuppoſition, that the growing price of corn was not lower abroad than at home, and in this caſe his ſuppoſition would probably be correct. In the caſe before ſuppoſed however, the extra profits of the farmer would be only two ſhillings. As far as this advance would go, it would raiſe the profits of farming, and encourage him to grow more corn. The next year therefore the ſupply would be increaſed in proportion to the number of purchaſers

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chaſers of the year before, and to make this additional quantity go off, the price muſt fall; and it would of courſe fall both in the foreign and the home market, as while any exportation continues, the price in the home market will be regulated by the price in foreign markets with the addition of the bounty. This fall may be inconſiderable, but ſtill the effect will be in this direction, and after the firſt year, the price of corn will for ſome time continue to fall towards its former level. In the mean time however, the cheapneſs of corn abroad might gradually tend to increaſe the number of purchaſers, and extend the effectual demand for corn, not only at the late reduced prices, but at the original or even higher prices. But every extenſion of this kind would tend to raiſe the price of corn abroad to a nearer level with the growing price at home, and conſequently would give the Britiſh farmer a greater advantage from the bounty. If the demand abroad extended only in proportion to the cheapneſs, the effect would be, that part of the agriculture of foreign countries would be checked to make room for the increaſed agriculture of Britain, and ſome of the foreign growers, who traded upon the ſmalleſt profits, would be juſtled out of the markets.

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At what time the advanced price at home would begin to affect the price of labour and of all other commodities, it would be very difficult to ſay; but it is probable, that the interval might be conſiderable, becauſe the firſt and greateſt riſe, upon the ſuppoſition that has been made, would not be above threepence in the buſhel, and this advance would for ſome time diminiſh every year. But after the full effect from this advance, whatever it might be, had taken place, the influence of the bounty would by no means be loſt. For ſome years it would give the Britiſh grower an abſolute advantage over the foreign grower. This advantage would of courſe gradually diminiſh, becauſe it is the nature of all effectual demand to be ultimately ſupplied, and to oblige the producers to ſell at the loweſt price that they can afford. But after having experienced a period of very decided encouragement, the Britiſh grower will find himſelf at laſt on a level with the foreign grower, which he was not before the bounty, and in the habit of ſupplying a larger market than his own upon equal terms with his competitors. And after this, if the foreign and Britiſh markets continued to extend themſelves equally, the Britiſh grower would continue to

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proportion his ſupplies to both; becauſe, unleſs a particular increaſe of demand were to take place at home, he could never withdraw his foreign ſupply without lowering the price of his whole crop; and the nation would thus be in poſſeſſion of a conſtant ſtore for years of ſcarcity.

To the preſent ſtate of things, indeed, the ſuppoſition here made will not apply. In average years we do not grow enough for our own conſumption. Our firſt object muſt therefore be to ſupply our own wants, before we aim at obtaining an exceſs, and the reſtrictive laws on importation are ſtrongly calculated to produce this effect. It is difficult to conceive a more decided encouragement to the inveſtment of capital in agriculture, than the certainty, that for many years to come the price will never fall ſo low as the growing price according to the exiſting leaſes. If ſuch a certainty has no tendency to give encouragement to Britiſh agriculture, on account of the advance it may occaſion in the price of labour, it may ſafely be pronounced, that no poſſible increaſe of wealth and population can ever encourage the production of corn.[a] In a nation which never imported corn except

[a] If the operation of the corn laws, as they were eſtabliſhed

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except in a ſcarcity, commerce could never get the ſtart of agriculture; and reſtrictive laws on importation, as far as they go, tend to give a relative diſcouragement to manufactures, and a relative encouragement to agriculture. If without diminiſhing manufactures, they were merely to determine a greater part of the future annual accumulation to fall on the land, the effect would undoubtedly be in the higheſt degree deſirable; but even allowing, that the preſent very rapid march of wealth in general were to ſuffer a ſlight relaxation in its progreſs, if there be any foundation whatever for the alarms that have of late been expreſſed reſpecting the advantageous employment of ſo rapidly increaſing a capital, we might ſurely be willing to ſacrifice a ſmall portion of preſent riches, in order to attain a greater degree

in 1700, had continued uninterrupted, I cannot bring myſelf to believe, that we ſhould now be in the habit of importing ſo much corn as we do at preſent. Putting the bounty on exportation out of the queſtion, the reſtrictive laws on importation alone would have made it impoſſible. The demand for Britiſh corn would, for the laſt 30 years, have been both greater and more uniform than it has been; and it is contrary to every principle of ſupply and demand to ſuppoſe, that this would not have occaſioned a greater growth. Dr. Smith's argument clearly proves too much, which is as bad as proving too little.

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of ſecurity, independence, and permanent proſperity.

Having conſidered the effect of the bounty on the farmer, it remains to conſider its effect on the conſumer. It muſt be allowed, that all the direct effects of the bounty are to raiſe, and not to lower the price of corn to the conſumer; but its indirect effects are both to lower the average price, and to prevent the variations above and below that price. If we take any period of ſome length prior to the eſtabliſhment of the bounty, we ſhall find, that the average price of corn is moſt powerfully affected by years of ſcarcity. From 1637 to 1700, both incluſive, the average price of corn, according to Dr. Smith, was 2l. 11s. $0\frac{1}{3}$d.; yet in 1688 the growing price, according to an eſtimate of Gregory King, which Dr. Smith ſuppoſes to be correct, was only 1l. 8s. It appears therefore, that during this period it was the price of ſcarcity, rather than the growing price, which influenced the general average. But this high average price would not proportionally encourage the cultivation of corn. Though the farmer might feel very ſanguine during one or two years of high price, and project many improvements, yet the glut in the market, which would

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follow, would depreſs him in the ſame degree, and deſtroy all his projects. Sometimes, indeed, a year of high price really tends to impoveriſh the land, and prepare the way for future ſcarcity. The period is too ſhort to determine more capital to the land, and a temporary plenty is often reſtored by ſowing ground that is not ready for it, and thus injuring the permanent intereſts of agriculture. It may eaſily happen therefore, that a very fluctuating price, although the general average be high, will not tend to encourage the determination of capital to the land in the ſame degree as a ſteadier price with a lower general average, provided that this average is above the growing price. And if the bounty has any tendency to encourage a greater ſupply, and to cauſe the general average to be more affected by the growing price than the price of ſcarcity, it may produce a benefit of very high magnitude to the conſumer, while at the ſame time it furniſhes a better encouragement to the farmer; two objects which have been conſidered as incompatible, though not with ſufficient reaſon. For let us ſuppoſe, that the growing price in this country is 55 ſhillings per quarter, and that for three years out of the laſt ten the price from ſcarcity had been five guineas, for four years 55 ſhillings,

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ſhillings, and for the remaining three years 52 ſhillings. In this caſe the average of the ten years will be a little above 3l. 9s. This is a moſt encouraging price; but the three years which were below the growing price would deſtroy in a great meaſure its effect; and it cannot be doubted, that agriculture would have received a much more beneficial impulſe, if the price had continued ſteadily at 3 guineas during the whole time. With regard to the conſumer, the advantage of the latter average need not be inſiſted on.

When Dr. Smith aſſerted, that a fall in the price of corn could not poſſibly happen in conſequence of a bounty, he overlooked a diſtinction, which it is neceſſary to make in this caſe, between the growing price of corn in years of common plenty, and the average price of a period including years of ſcarcity, which are in fact two very different things. Suppoſing the wages of labour to be regulated more frequently by the former than the latter price, which perhaps is the caſe, it will readily be allowed, that the bounty could not lower the growing price; though it might very eaſily lower the average price of a long period, and I have no doubt whatever had this effect in a conſiderable degree during the firſt half of the laſt century.

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The operation of the bounty on the value of ſilver is, in the ſame manner, in its direct effects to depreciate it, but its indirect effects may perhaps tend more powerfully to prevent it from falling. In the progreſs of wealth, when commerce outſtrips agriculture, there is a conſtant tendency to a depreciation of ſilver; and a tendency to an oppoſite effect, when the balance leans to the ſide of agriculture. During the firſt half of the laſt century agriculture ſeemed to flouriſh more than commerce, and ſilver, according to Dr, Smith, ſeemed to riſe in value in moſt of the countries in Europe. During the latter half of the century commerce ſeemed to have got the ſtart of agriculture, and the effect not being counteracted by a deficiency of circulating medium, ſilver has been very generally depreciated. As far as this depreciation is common to the commercial world, it is comparatively[a] of little importance; but undoubtedly

[a] Even the depreciation which is common to the commercial world produces much evil to individuals who have fixed incomes, and one important national evil, that of indiſpoſing landlords to let long leaſes of farms. With regard to leaſes, the operation of the bounty would certainly be favourable. It has appeared, that, after the advance occaſioned on its firſt eſtabliſhment, the price of corn would for many years tend to fall towards its former level, and if no other cauſes intervened, a very

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undoubtedly thoſe nations will feel it moſt, where this cauſe has prevailed in the greateſt degree, and where the nominal price of labour has riſen the higheſt, and has been moſt affected by the competition of commercial wealth, operating on a comparative deficiency of corn. It will certainly be allowed, that thoſe landed nations, which ſupply the ports of Europe with corn, will be the leaſt liable to this diſadvantage; and even thoſe ſmall ſtates whoſe wants are known will probably ſuffer leſs, than thoſe whoſe wants, at the ſame time that they are quite uncertain, may be very conſiderable. That England is in the latter ſituation, and that the rapid progreſs of commercial wealth, combined with years of ſcarcity, has raiſed the nominal price of wages more than in any other country of Europe, will

a very conſiderable time might elapſe, before it had regained the height from which it began to ſink. Conſequently after the firſt depreciation, future depreciation would be checked, and of courſe long leaſes more encouraged. The abſolute depreciation occaſioned by the eſtabliſhment of the bounty would be perfectly inconſiderable, compared with the other cauſes of depreciation, which are conſtantly operating in this country. Independently of the funding ſyſtem, the extended uſe of paper, the influx of commercial wealth, and the comparative deficiency of corn, every tax on the neceſſaries of life tends to lower the value of ſilver.

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not be denied; and the natural conſequence is, that ſilver is more depreciated here than in the reſt of Europe.

If the bounty has any effect in weakening this cauſe of depreciation, by preventing the average price of corn from being ſo much affected by the price of ſcarcity, the ultimate advantage, which its indirect operation occaſions, with regard to the value of ſilver, may more than counterbalance the preſent diſadvantage of its direct operation.

On the whole therefore it appears, that the corn laws, by opening a larger, but more particularly by opening a ſteadier demand for Britiſh corn, muſt give a decided encouragement to Britiſh agriculture.[a]

This,

[a] On account of the tendency of population to increaſe in proportion to the means of ſubſiſtence, it has been ſuppoſed by ſome, that there would always be a ſufficient demand at home for any quantity of corn which could be grown. But this is an error. It is undoubtedly true, that, if the farmers could gradually increaſe their growth of corn to any extent, and could ſell it *ſufficiently cheap*, a population would ariſe at home to demand the whole of it. But in this caſe, the great increaſe of demand ariſes ſolely from the cheapneſs, and muſt therefore be totally of a different nature from ſuch a demand as, in the actual circumſtances of the country, would encourage

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This, it will be allowed, is an advantage of conſiderable magnitude; but this advantage cannot be attained without the atttendant evil of eſtabliſhing a fixed difference between the price of corn in Britain and in the ports of Europe, and as far as the nominal price of corn regulates the price of all other commodities, a proportional difference in the value of ſilver. With regard to the *permanent* intereſts of commerce there is great reaſon to believe, that this diſadvantage would be more than counterbalanced by the tendency of a fuller and ſteadier ſupply of corn to prevent the future depreciation of ſilver in this country: but ſtill it is a preſent evil; and the good and evil of the ſyſtem muſt be compared with the good and evil of a perfect freedom in the commerce of grain, the name of which is undoubtedly moſt faſcinating. The advantages of an unlimited freedom of importation and exportation are obvious. The ſpe-

encourage an increaſed ſupply. If the makers of ſuperfine broad cloths would ſell their commodity for a ſhilling a yard inſtead of a guinea, it cannot be doubted, that the demand would increaſe more than ten fold; but the certainty of ſuch an increaſe of demand, in ſuch a caſe, would have no tendency whatever, in the actual circumſtances of any known country, to encourage the manufacture of broad cloths.

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cific evil to be apprehended from it in a rich and commercial country is, that the rents of land and the wages of labour would not fall in proportion to the fall in the price of corn. If land yielded no other produce than corn, the proprietors would be abſolutely obliged to lower their rents exactly in proportion to the diminiſhed demand and diminiſhed price, becauſe, univerſally, it is price that determines rent, not rent that determines price; but in a country where the demands for the products of paſture are very great, and daily increaſing, the rents of land would not be entirely determined by the price of corn; and though they would fall with a fall in the price of corn, they would not fall in proportion. In the ſame manner the wages of labour, being influenced not only by the price of corn, but by the competition of commercial wealth, and the other cauſes before enumerated, though they would probably fall with a fall in the price of corn would not fall in proportion. During the firſt half of the laſt century, the average price of corn, fell conſiderably, but, owing to the demand for labour ariſing from an increaſing commerce, the price of labour did not fall with it. High rents and high wages, occaſioned by an increaſed demand and an increaſed price of corn, cannot poſſibly

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poſſibly ſtop cultivation, for the obvious reaſon, that the power of paying the advance is given previous to the advance taking place; but high rents and high wages ſupported by other cauſes than the price of corn tend moſt powerfully to ſtop it. Under theſe circumſtances land, on which little labour has been beſtowed, will generally yield a higher rent than that, on which much has been beſtowed, and the bringing of freſh land under cultivation is moſt powerfully checked. A rich and commercial nation is thus by the natural courſe of things led more to paſture than tillage, and is tempted to become daily more dependent upon others for its ſupplies of corn. If all the nations of Europe could be conſidered as one great country, and if any one ſtate could be as ſecure of its ſupplies from others, as the paſture diſtricts of a particular ſtate are from the corn diſtricts in their neighbourhood, there would be no harm in this dependence, and no perſon would think of propoſing corn laws. But can we ſafely conſider Europe in this light? The fortunate ſituation of this country, and the excellence of its laws and government, exempt it above any other nation from foreign invaſion and domeſtic tumult; and it is a pardonable

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donable love of one's country, which under ſuch circumſtances produces an unwillingneſs to expoſe it, in ſo important a point as the ſupply of its principal food, to ſhare in the changes and chances which may happen to the continent. How would the miſeries of France have been aggravated during the revolution, if ſhe had been dependent on foreign countries for the ſupport of two or three millions of her people!

That we can readily turn ourſelves from an importing to an exporting nation, in the article of corn, I would by no means pretend to ſay; but both theory, and the experience of the firſt half of the laſt century, warrant us in concluding it practicable; and we cannot but allow, that it is worth the experiment, as the permanence of our national proſperity may depend upon it.[a] If we proceed in our preſent courſe, let us but for a moment reflect on the probable conſequences. We can hardly doubt, that in the courſe of ſome years we ſhall draw

[a] Since this was firſt written, a new ſyſtem of corn laws has been eſtabliſhed by the legiſlature, but it is not ſo powerful in its operation as that of 1688 and 1700. The new laws tend ſtrongly to encourage the growth of an independent ſupply of corn, but not ſo ſtrongly the production of an exceſs. An independent ſupply however is certainly the firſt and moſt important object.

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from America, and the nations bordering on the Baltic, as much as two millions of quarters of wheat, beſides other corn, the ſupport of above two millions of people. If under theſe circumſtances, any commercial diſcuſſion, or other diſpute, were to ariſe with theſe nations, with what a weight of power they would negotiate! Not the whole Britiſh navy could offer a more convincing argument than the ſimple threat of ſhutting all their ports. I am not unaware, that in general, we may ſecurely depend upon people's not acting directly contrary to their intereſt. But this conſideration, all powerful as it is, will ſometimes yield voluntarily to national indignation, and is ſometimes forced to yield to the reſentment of a ſovereign. It is of ſufficient weight in practice when applied to manufactures; becauſe a delay in their ſale is not of ſuch immediate conſequence, and from their ſmaller bulk they are eaſily ſmuggled. But in the caſe of corn, a delay of three or four months may produce the moſt complicated miſery; and from the great bulk of corn, it will generally be in the power of a ſovereign to execute almoſt completely his reſentful purpoſe. Small commercial ſtates, which depend nearly for the whole of their ſupplies on foreign powers, will

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always have many friends. They are not of ſufficient conſequence to excite any general indignation againſt them, and if they cannot be ſupplied from one quarter, they will from another. But this is by no means the caſe with ſuch a country as Great Britain, whoſe commercial ambition is peculiarly calculated to excite a general jealouſy, and in fact has excited it to a very great degree. If our commerce continue increaſing for a few years, and our commercial population with it, we ſhall be laid ſo bare to the ſhafts of fortune, that nothing but a miracle can ſave us from being ſtruck. The periodical return of ſuch ſeaſons of dearth, as thoſe which we have of late experienced, I conſider as abſolutely certain, upon our preſent importing ſyſtem; but excluding from the queſtion at preſent the dreadful diſtreſs that they occaſion, which however no man of humanity can long baniſh from his mind, I would aſk, is it politic, merely with a view to our national greatneſs, to render ourſelves thus dependent upon others for our ſupport, and put it in the power of a combination againſt us, to diminiſh our population two millions?

To reſtore our independence, and build our national greatneſs and commercial proſperity on the

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the ſure foundation of agriculture, it is evidently not ſufficient, to propoſe premiums for tillage, to cultivate this or that waſte, or even to paſs a general encloſure bill, though theſe are all excellent as far as they go. If the increaſe of the commercial population keep pace with theſe efforts, we ſhall only be where we were before, with regard to the neceſſity of importation. The object required is, to alter the relative proportion between the commercial and the agricultural population of the country, which can only be done by ſome ſyſtem, that will determine a greater proportion of the national capital to the land. I ſee no other way at preſent of effecting this object, but by corn laws adapted to the peculiar circumſtances of the country and the ſtate of foreign markets.[a] All ſyſtems of peculiar reſtraints and encouragements are undoubtedly diſagreeable, and the neceſſity of reſorting to them may juſtly be la-

[a] I do not mean to aſſert, that any laws of this kind would have ſufficient power, in the preſent ſtate of things, to reſtore the balance between our agricultural and commercial population; but I am decidedly of opinion, that they have this tendency. They ſhould of courſe be ſupported by a general encloſure bill if poſſible, and by every relief that can ſafely be granted from taxes, tithes, and poor rates, in the cultivation of freſh lands.

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mented. But the objection which Dr. Smith brings againſt bounties in general, that of forcing ſome part of the induſtry of the country into a channel leſs advantageous than that in which it would run of its own accord,[a] does not apply in the preſent inſtance, on account of the preeminent qualities of the products of agriculture, and the dreadful conſequences that attend the ſligheſt failure of them. The nature of things has indeed ſtamped upon corn a peculiar value;[b] and this remark, made by Dr. Smith for another purpoſe, may fairly be applied to juſtify the exception of this commodity from the objections againſt bounties in general. If throughout the commercial world every kind of trade were perfectly free, one ſhould undoubtedly feel the greateſt reluctance in propoſing any interruption to ſuch a ſyſtem of general liberty; and indeed, under ſuch circumſtances, agriculture would not need peculiar encouragements. But under the preſent univerſal prevalence of the commercial ſyſtem, with all its diffrent expedients of encouragement and reſtraint, it is folly to except from our attention the great manufacture of corn, which

[a] Wealth of Nations, vol. ii, b. iv, c. v, p. 278.

[b] Ibid.

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ſupports all the reſt. The high duties paid on the importation of foreign manufactures are ſo direct an encouragement to the manufacturing part of the ſociety, that nothing but ſome encouragement of the ſame kind can place the manufacturers and cultivators of this country on a fair footing. Any ſyſtem of encouragement therefore, which might be found neceſſary for the commerce of grain, would evidently be owing to the prior encouragements, which had been given to manufactures. If all be free, I have nothing to ſay; but if we protect and encourage, it ſeems to be folly not to encourage that production, which of all others is the moſt important and valuable.[a]

Let

[a] Though I have dwelt much on the importance of raiſing a quantity of corn in the country beyond the demands of the home conſumption, yet I do not mean to recommend that general ſyſtem of ploughing, which takes place in moſt parts of France, and defeats its own purpoſe. A large ſtock of cattle is not only neceſſary as a very valuable part of the food of the country, and as contributing very greatly to the comforts of a conſiderable portion of its population; but it is alſo neceſſary in the production of corn itſelf. A large ſurplus produce, in proportion to the number of perſons employed, can never be obtained without a great ſtock of cattle. At the ſame time it does not follow, that we ſhould throw all the land that is fit for it into paſture. It is an obſervation of

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Let it not however be imagined, that the moſt enlightened ſyſtem of agriculture, though it

Mr. Young, and I ſhould think a juſt one, that the firſt and moſt obvious improvement in agriculture is to make the fallows of a country ſupport the additional cattle and ſheep wanted in it. (Travels in France, vol. i, p. 361.) I am by no means ſanguine, however, as to the practicability of converting England again into an exporting country, while the demands for the products of paſture are daily increaſing, from the increaſing riches of the commercial part of the nation. But ſhould this be really conſidered as impracticable, it ſeems to point out to us one of the great cauſes of the decay of nations. We have always heard, that ſtates and empires have their periods of declenſion; and we learn from hiſtory, that the different nations of the earth have flouriſhed in a kind of ſucceſſion, and that poor countries have been continually riſing on the ruins of their richer neighbours. Upon the commercial ſyſtem, this kind of ſucceſſion ſeems to be in the natural and neceſſary courſe of things, independently of the effects of war. If from the increaſing riches of the commercial part of any nation, and the conſequently increaſing demands for the products of paſture, more land were daily laid down to graſs, and more corn imported from other countries, the unvoidable conſequence ſeems to be, that the increaſing proſperity of theſe countries, which their exportations of corn would contribute to accelerate, muſt ultimately diminiſh the population and power of the countries which had foſtered them. The ancients always attributed this natural weakneſs and old age of ſtates to luxury. But the moderns, who have generally conſidered luxury as a principal encouragement to commerce and manufactures, and conſequently a powerful inſtrument

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it will undoubtedly be able to produce food beyond the demands of the actual population, can ever

inſtrument of proſperity, have, with great appearance of reaſon, been unwilling to conſider it as a cauſe of decline. But allowing, with the moderns, all the advantages of luxury; and when it falls ſhort of actual vice, they are certainly great; there ſeems to be a point beyond which it muſt neceſſarily become prejudicial to a ſtate, and bring with it the ſeeds of weakneſs and decay. This point is when it is puſhed ſo far, as to trench on the funds neceſſary for its ſupport, and to become an impediment inſtead of an encouragement to agriculture.

I ſhould be much miſunderſtood, if, from any thing that I have ſaid in the four laſt chapters, I ſhould be conſidered as not ſufficiently aware of the advantages derived from commerce and manufactures. I look upon them as the moſt diſtinguiſhing characteriſtics of civilization, the moſt obvious and ſtriking marks of the improvement of ſociety, and calculated to enlarge our enjoyments, and add to the ſum of human happineſs. No great ſurplus produce of agriculture could exiſt without them, and if it did exiſt, it would be comparatively of very little value. But ſtill they are rather the ornaments and embelliſhments of the political ſtructure than its foundations. While theſe foundations are perfectly ſecure, we cannot be too ſolicitous to make all the apartments convenient and elegant; but if there be the ſlighteſt reaſon to fear, that the foundations themſelves may give way, it ſeems to be folly to continue directing our principal attention to the leſs eſſential parts. There has never yet been an inſtance in hiſtory of a large nation continuing with undiminiſhed vigour, to ſupport four or five millions of its people on

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ever be made to keep pace with an unchecked population. The errors that have ariſen from the

imported corn; nor do I believe, that there ever will be ſuch an inſtance in future. England is undoubtedly, from her inſular ſituation, and commanding navy, the moſt likely to form an exception to this rule; but in ſpite even of the peculiar advantages of England it appears to be clear, that, if ſhe continue yearly to increaſe her importations of corn, ſhe cannot ultimately eſcape that decline, which ſeems to be the natural and neceſſary conſequence of exceſſive commercial wealth. I am not now ſpeaking of the next twenty or thirty years, but of the next two or three hundred. And though we are little in the habit of looking ſo far forwards, yet it may be queſtioned, whether we are not bound in duty to make ſome exertions to avoid a ſyſtem, which muſt neceſſarily terminate in the weakneſs and decline of our poſterity. But whether we make any practical application of ſuch a diſcuſſion or not, it is curious, to contemplate the cauſes of thoſe reverſes in the fates of empires, which ſo frequently changed the face of the world in paſt times, and may be expected to produce ſimilar, though perhaps not ſuch violent changes in future. War was undoubtedly in ancient times the principal cauſe of theſe changes; but it frequently only finiſhed a work, which exceſs of luxury and the neglect of agriculture had begun. Foreign invaſions, or internal convulſions, produce but a temporary and comparatively ſlight effect on ſuch countries as Lombardy, Tuſcany, and Flanders, but are fatal to ſuch ſtates as Holland and Hamburgh; and though the commerce and manufactures of England will probably always be ſupported in a great degree by her agriculture, yet that part which is not ſo ſupported will ſtill remain ſubject to the reverſes of dependent ſtates.

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the conſtant appearance of a full ſupply produced by the agricultural ſyſtem, and the ſource of ſome other prejudices on the ſubject of population, will be noticed in the following chapter.

We ſhould recollect, that it is only within the laſt twenty or thirty years, that we have become an importing nation. In ſo ſhort a period, it could hardly be expected, that the evils of the ſyſtem ſhould be perceptible. We have however already felt ſome of its inconveniences; and if we perſevere in it, its evil conſequences may by no means be a matter of remote ſpeculation.

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CHAP. XI.

On the prevailing Errors reſpecting Population and Plenty.

It has been obſerved, that many countries at the period of their greateſt degree of populouſneſs have lived in the greateſt plenty, and have been able to export corn; but at other periods, when their population was very low, have lived in continual poverty and want, and have been obliged to import corn. Egypt, Paleſtine, Rome, Sicily, and Spain, are cited as particular exemplifications of this fact; and it has been inferred, that an increaſe of population in any ſtate, not cultivated to the utmoſt, will tend rather to augment than diminiſh the relative plenty of the whole ſociety; and that, as Lord Kaimes obſerves, a country cannot eaſily become too populous for agriculture; becauſe agriculture has the ſignal property of producing food in proportion to the number of conſumers.[a]

The general facts, from which theſe inferences

[a] Sketches of the Hiſtory of Man, b. i, ſketch i, p. 106, 107, 8vo. 1788.

are

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are drawn, there is no reaſon to doubt; but the inferences by no means follow from the premiſes. It is the nature of agriculture, particularly when well conducted, to produce ſupport for a conſiderable number above that which it employs; and conſequently if theſe members of the ſociety, or, as Sir James Steuart calls them, the free hands, do not increaſe, ſo as to reach the limit of the number which can be ſupported by the ſurplus produce, the whole population of the country may continue for ages increaſing with the improving ſtate of agriculture, and yet always be ableto export corn. But this increaſe, after a certain period, will be very different from the natural and unreſtricted increaſe of population; it will merely follow the ſlow augmentation of produce from the gradual improvement of agriculture, and population will ſtill be checked by the difficulty of procuring ſubſiſtence. It is very juſtly obſerved by Sir James Steuart, that the population of England in the middle of the laſt century, when the exports of corn were conſiderable, was ſtill checked for want of food.[a] The preciſe meaſure of the population in a country thus circumſtanced will not indeed be the quantity of food, becauſe

[a] Polit. Econ. vol. i, b. i, c. xv, p. 100.

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part of it is exported, but the quantity of employment. The ſtate of this employment however will neceſſarily regulate the wages of labour, on which depends the power of the lower claſſes of people to procure food; and according as the employment of the country is increaſing, whether ſlowly or rapidly, theſe wages will be ſuch, as either to check or to encourage early marriages, ſuch, as to enable a labourer to ſupport only two or three, or as many as five or ſix children.

The quantity of employment in any country will not of courſe vary from year to year, in the ſame manner as the quantity of produce muſt neceſſarily do, from the variation of the ſeaſons; and conſequently the check from want of employment will be much more ſteady in its operation, and be much more favourable to the lower claſſes of people, than the check from the immediate want of food. The firſt will be the preventive check; the ſecond the poſitive check. When the demand for labour is either ſtationary, or increaſing very ſlowly, people not ſeeing any employment open by which they can ſupport a family, or the wages of common labour being inadequate to this purpoſe, will of courſe be deterred from marrying. But if a demand

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demand for labour continue increaſing with ſome rapidity, although the ſupply of food be uncertain, on account of variable ſeaſons and a dependence on other countries, the population will evidently go on, till it is poſitively checked by famine, or the diſeaſes ariſing from ſevere want.

Scarcity and extreme poverty therefore may or may not accompany an increaſing population, according to circumſtances: but they muſt neceſſarily accompany a permanently declining population; becauſe there never has been, nor probably ever will be, any other cauſe than want of food, which makes the population of a country permanently decline. In the numerous inſtances of depopulation which occur in hiſtory, the cauſes of it may always be traced to the want of induſtry, or the ill direction of that induſtry, ariſing from violence, bad government, ignorance, &c. which firſt occaſions a want of food, and of courſe depopulation follows. When Rome adopted the cuſtom of importing all her corn, and laying all Italy into paſture, ſhe ſoon declined in population. The cauſes of the depopulation of Egypt and Turkey have already been alluded to; and in the caſe of Spain, it was certainly not the numerical loſs of people occaſioned

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ſioned by the expulſion of the Moors; but the induſtry and capital thus expelled, which permanently injured her population. When a country has been depopulated by violent cauſes, if a bad government, with its uſual concomitant inſecurity of property enſue, which has generally been the caſe in all thoſe counties which are now leſs peopled than formerly, neither the food nor the population can recover itſelf and the inhabitants will probably live in ſevere want. But when an accidental depopulation takes place, in a country which was before populous and induſtrious, and in the habit of exporting corn, if the remaining inhabitants be left at liberty to exert, and do exert, their induſtry in the ſame direction as before, it is a ſtrange idea to entertain, that they would then be unable to ſupply themſelves with corn in the ſame plenty; particularly as the diminiſhed numbers would of courſe cultivate principally the more fertile parts of their territory, and not be obliged, as in their more populous ſtate, to apply to ungrateful ſoils. Countries in this ſituation would evidently have the ſame chance of recovering their former number, as they had originally of reaching this number; and indeed if abſolute

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populouſneſs were neceſſary to relative plenty, as ſome agriculturiſts have ſuppoſed*, it would be impoſſible for new colonies to increaſe with the ſame rapidity as old ſtates.

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* Among others, I allude more particularly to Mr. Anderſon, who, in a *Calm Inveſtigation of the Circumſtances which have led to the preſent Scarcity of Grain in Britain*, (publiſhed in 1801) has laboured with extraordinary earneſtneſs, and I believe with the beſt intentions poſſible, to impreſs this curious truth on the minds of his countrymen. The particular poſition which he attempts to prove is, *that an increaſe of population in any ſtate, whoſe fields have not been made to attain their higheſt poſſible degree of productiveneſs, (a thing that probably has never yet been ſeen on this globe) will neceſſarily have its means of ſubſiſtence rather augmented than diminiſhed by that augmentation of its population; and the reverſe.* The propoſition is, to be ſure, expreſſed rather obſcurely; but from the context, his meaning evidently is, that every increaſe of population tends to increaſe relative plenty, and vice verſa. He concludes his proofs by obſerving, that, if the facts which he has thus brought forward and connected, do not ſerve to remove the fears of thoſe, who doubt the poſſibility of this country producing abundance to ſuſtain its increaſing population, were it to augment in a ratio greatly more progreſſive than it has yet done, he ſhould doubt whether they could be convinced of it, were one even to riſe from the dead to tell them ſo. Mr. A. is perhaps juſtified in this doubt, from the known incredulity of the age, which might cauſe people to remain unconvinced in both caſes. I agree with Mr. A. however, entirely, reſpecting the importance of directing a greater part of

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The prejudices on the ſubject of population bear a very ſtriking reſemblance to the old prejudices about ſpecie, and we know how ſlowly and with what difficulty theſe laſt have yielded to juſter conceptions. Politicians obſerving, that ſtates which were powerful and proſperous were almoſt invariably populous, have miſtaken an effect for a cauſe, and concluded, that their population was the cauſe of their proſperity, inſtead of their proſperity being the cauſe of their population; as the old political economiſts concluded, that the abundance of ſpecie was the cauſe of national wealth, inſtead of the effect of it. The annual produce of the land and labour, in both theſe inſtances, became in conſequence a ſecondary conſideration; and its increaſe, it was conceived, would naturally follow the increaſe of ſpecie in the one caſe, or of population in the other. The folly of endeavouring by forcible means to increaſe the quantity of ſpecie in any country, and the abſolute impoſſibility of accu-

of the national induſtry to agriculture; but from the circumſtance of its being poſſible for a country, with a certain direction of its induſtry, always to export corn, although it may be very populous, he has been led into the ſtrange error of ſuppoſing, that an agricultural country could ſupport an unchecked population.

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mulating it beyond a certain level by any human laws that can be deviſed, are now fully eſtabliſhed, and have been completely exemplified in the inſtances of Spain and Portugal: but the illuſion ſtill remains reſpecting population; and under this impreſſion, almoſt every political treatiſe has abounded in propoſals to encourage population, with little or no comparative reference to the means of its ſupport. Yet ſurely the folly of endeavouring to increaſe the quantity of ſpecie in any country, without an increaſe of the commodities which it is to circulate, is not greater, than that of endeavouring to increaſe the number of people, without an increaſe of the food which is to maintain them; and it will be found, that the level above which no human laws can raiſe the population of a country is a limit more fixed and impaſſable than the limit to the accumulation of ſpecie. However improbable in fact, it is poſſible to conceive, that means might be invented of retaining a quantity of ſpecie in a ſtate, greatly beyond what was demanded by the produce of its land and labour; but when by great encouragements population has been raiſed to ſuch a height, that this produce is meted out to each individual in the ſmalleſt portions that can ſupport life, no

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ſtretch of ingenuity can even conceive the poſſibility of going further.

It has appeared, I think, clearly, in the review of different ſocieties given in the former part of this work, that thoſe countries, the inhabitants of which were ſunk in the moſt barbarous ignorance, or oppreſſed by the moſt cruel tyranny, however low they might be in actual population, were very populous in proportion to their means of ſubſiſtence; and upon the ſlightest failure of the ſeaſons generally ſuffered the ſeverities of want. Ignorance and deſpotiſm ſeem to have no tendency to deſtroy the paſſion, which prompts to increaſe; but they effectually deſtroy the checks to it from reaſon and foreſight. The improvident barbarian, who thinks only of his preſent wants, or the miſerable peaſant, who, from his political ſituation, feels little ſecurity of reaping what he has ſown, will ſeldom be deterred from gratifying his paſſions by the proſpect of inconveniences, which cannot be expected to preſs on him under three or four years. But though this want of foreſight, which is foſtered by ignorance and deſpotiſm, tends thus rather to encourage the procreation of children, it is abſolutely fatal to the induſtry which is to ſupport them. Induſtry cannot

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cannot exiſt without foreſight and ſecurity. The indolence of the ſavage is well known; and the poor Egyptian or Abyſſinian Farmer without capital, who rents land which is let out yearly to the higheſt bidder, and who is conſtantly ſubject to the demands of his tyrannical maſters, to the caſual plunder of an enemy, and, not unfrequently, to the violation of his miſerable contract, can have no heart to be induſtrious, and, if he had, could not exerciſe that induſtry with ſucceſs. Even poverty itſelf, which appears to be the great ſpur to induſtry, when it has once paſſed certain limits, almoſt ceaſes to operate. The indigence which is hopeleſs deſtroys all vigorous exertion, and confines the efforts to what is ſufficient for bare exiſtence. It is the hope of bettering our condition, and the fear of want, rather than want itſelf, that is the beſt ſtimulus to induſtry; and its moſt conſtant and beſt directed efforts will almoſt invariably be found among a claſs of people above the claſs of the wretchedly poor.

The effect of ignorance and oppreſſion will therefore always be to deſtroy the ſprings of induſtry, and conſequently to diminiſh the annual produce of the land and labour in any country; and this diminution will inevitably be followed

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by a decreaſe of the population, in ſpite of the birth of any number of children whatever annually. The deſire of immediate gratification, and the removal of the reſtraints to it from prudence, may perhaps, in ſuch countries, prompt univerſally to early marriages; but when theſe habits have once reduced the people to the loweſt poſſible ſtate of poverty, they can evidently have no further effect upon the population. Their only effect muſt be on the degree of mortality; and there is no doubt, that, if we could obtain accurate bills of mortality in thoſe ſouthern countries, where very few women remain unmarried, and all marry young, the proportion of the annual deaths would be 1 in 17, 18, or 20, inſtead of 1 in 34, 36, or 40, as in European ſtates, where the preventive check operates.

That an increaſe of population, when it follows in its natural order, is both a great poſitive good in itſelf, and abſolutely neceſſary to a further increaſe in the annual produce of the land and labour of any country, I ſhould be the laſt to deny. The only queſtion is, what is the natural order of its progreſs? In this point Sir James Steuart, who has in general explained this ſubject ſo well, appears to me to have fallen into

into an error. He determines, that multiplication is the efficient cauſe of agriculture, and not agriculture of multiplication.[a] But though it may be allowed, that the increaſe of people beyond what could eaſily ſubſiſt on the natural fruits of the earth firſt prompted man to till the ground; and that the view of maintaining a family, or of obtaining ſome valuable conſideration in exchange for the products of agriculture, ſtill operates as the principal ſtimulus to cultivation; yet it is clear, that theſe products, in their actual ſtate, muſt be beyond the loweſt wants of the exiſting population, before any permanent increaſe can poſſibly be ſupported. We know, that a multiplication of births has in numberleſs inſtances taken place, which has produced no effect upon agriculture, and has merely been followed by an increaſe of diſeaſes; but perhaps there is no inſtance, where a permanent increaſe of agriculture has not effected a permanent increaſe of population ſomewhere or other. Conſequently, agriculture may with more propriety be termed the efficient cauſe of population, than population of agriculture;[b] though they certainly

[a] Polit. Econ. vol. i, b. i, c. xviii, p. 114.

[b] Sir James Steuart explains himſelf afterwards by ſaying,

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certainly react upon each other, and are mutually neceſſary to each other's ſupport. This indeed ſeems to be the hinge on which the ſubject turns, and all the prejudices reſpecting population have, perhaps, ariſen from a miſtake about the order of precedence.

The author of *L'Ami des Hommes*, in a chapter on the effects of a decay of agriculture upon population, acknowledges, that he had fallen into a fundamental error in conſidering population as the ſource of revenue; and that he was afterwards fully convinced, that revenue was the ſource of population.[a] From a want of attention to this moſt important diſtinction, ſtateſmen, in purſuit of the deſirable object of population, have been led to encourage early marriages, to reward the fathers of families, and to diſgrace celibacy; but this, as the ſame author juſtly obſerves, is to dreſs and water a piece of land without ſowing it, and yet to expect a crop.

Among the other prejudices, which have pre-

that he means principally the multiplication of thoſe perſons, who have ſome valuable conſideration to give for the products of agriculture; but this is evidently not mere increaſe of population, and ſuch an explanation ſeems to admit the incorrectneſs of the general propoſition.

[a] Tom. viii, p. 84, 12mo. 9 vols. 1762.

vailed

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vailed on the subject of population, it has been generally thought, that while there is either waste among the rich, or land remaining uncultivated in any country, the complaints for want of food cannot be justly founded; or at least that the pressure of distress upon the poor is to be attributed to the ill conduct of the higher classes of society, and the bad management of the land. The real effect however of these two circumstances is merely to narrow the limit of the actual population; but they have little or no influence on what may be called the average pressure of distress on the poorer members of society. If our ancestors had been so frugal and industrious, and had transmitted such habits to their posterity, that nothing superfluous was now consumed by the higher classes, no horses were used for pleasure, and no land was left uncultivated, a striking difference would appear in the state of the actual population; but probably none whatever, in the state of the lower classes of people, with respect to the price of labour, and the facility of supporting a family. The waste among the rich, and the horses kept for pleasure, have indeed a little the effect of the consumption of grain in distilleries, noticed before with regard to China. On the

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ſuppoſition, that the food conſumed in this manner may be withdrawn on the occaſion of a ſcarcity, and be applied to the relief of the poor, they operate certainly, as far as they go, like granaries which are only opened at the time that they are moſt wanted, and muſt therefore tend rather to benefit than to injure the lower claſſes of ſociety.

With regard to uncultivated land, it is evident, that its effect upon the poor is neither to injure nor to benefit them. The ſudden cultivation of it will indeed tend to improve their condition for a time, and the neglect of lands before cultivated will certainly make their ſituation worſe for a certain period; but when no changes of this kind are going forward, the effect of uncultivated land on the lower claſſes operates merely like the poſſeſſion of a ſmaller territory. It is indeed a point of very great importance to the poor, whether a country be in the habit of exporting or importing corn; but this point is not neceſſarily connected with the complete or incomplete cultivation of the whole territory, but depends upon the proportion of the ſurplus produce, to thoſe who are ſupported by it; and in fact this proportion is generally the greateſt, in countries which have not yet completed the

cultivation

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cultivation of all their territory. If every inch of land in this country were well cultivated, there would be no reaſon to expect, merely from this circumſtance, that we ſhould be able to export corn. Our power in this reſpect would depend entirely on the proportion of the ſurplus produce to the commercial population; and this of courſe would in its turn depend on the direction of capital to agriculture or commerce.

It is not probable, that any country with a large territory ſhould ever be completely cultivated; and I am inclined to think, that we often draw very inconſiderate concluſions againſt the induſtry and government of ſtates from the appearance of uncultivated lands in them. It ſeems to be the clear and expreſs duty of every government, to remove all obſtacles, and give every facility to the encloſure and cultivation of land; but when this has been done, the reſt muſt be left to the operation of individual intereſt; and upon this principle it cannot be expected, that any new land ſhould be brought into cultivation, the manure and the labour neceſſary for which might be employed to greater advantage on the improvement of land already in cultivation; and this is a caſe, which will very frequently occur. In countries poſſeſſed

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of a large territory, there will always be a great quantity of land of a middling quality, which requires conſtant dreſſing to prevent it from growing worſe, but which would admit of very great improvement, if a greater quantity of manure and labour could be employed upon it. The great obſtacle to the melioration of land is the difficulty, the expenſe, and ſometimes the impoſſibility of procuring a ſufficient quantity of dreſſing. As this inſtrument of improvement, therefore, is in practice limited, whatever it may be in theory, the queſtion will always be, how it may be moſt profitably employed; and in any inſtance, where a certain quantity of dreſſing and labour, employed to bring new land into cultivation, would have yielded a permanently greater produce, if employed upon old land, both the individual and the nation are loſers. Upon this principle, it is not uncommon for farmers in ſome ſituations never to dreſs their pooreſt land, but to get from it merely a ſcanty crop every three or four years, and to employ the whole of their manure, which they practically feel is limited, on thoſe parts of their farms, where it will produce a greater proportional effect.

The caſe will be different of courſe, in a

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small territory with a great population, supported on funds not derived from their own soil. In this case there will be little or no choice of land, and a comparative superabundance of manure; and under such circumstances the poorest soils may be brought under cultivation. But for this purpose, it is not mere population that is wanted, but a population which can obtain the produce of other countries, while it is gradually improving its own; otherwise it would be immediately reduced in proportion to the limited produce of this small and barren territory; and the melioration of the land might perhaps never take place; or if it did, it would take place very slowly indeed, and the population would always be exactly measured by this tardy rate, and could not possibly increase beyond it.

This subject is illustrated in the cultivation of the Campine in Brabant, which, according to the Abbé Mann,[a] consisted originally of the most barren and arid sand. Many attempts were made by private individuals to bring it under cultivation, but without success; which

[a] Memoir on the Agriculture of the Netherlands, published in vol. i of Communications to the Board of Agriculture, p. 225.

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proves, that, as a farming project, and considered as a sole dependence, the cultivation of it would not answer. Some religious houses, however, at last settled there; and being supported by other funds, and improving the land merely as a secondary object, they by degrees, in the course of some centuries, brought nearly the whole under cultivation, letting it out to farmers as soon as it was sufficiently improved.

There is no spot, however barren, which might not be made rich this way, or by the concentrated population of a manufacturing town: but this is no proof whatever, that, with respect to population and food, population has the precedence; because this concentrated population could not possibly exist, without the preceding existence of an adequate quantity of food in the surplus produce of some other district.

In a country like Brabant or Holland, where territory is the principal want, and not manure, such a district as the Campine is described to be may perhaps be cultivated with advantage. But in countries possessed of a large territory, and with a considerable quantity of land of a middling quality, the attempt to cultivate such a spot would be a palpable misdirection and waste

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waſte both of individual and national reſources.

The French have already found their error in bringing under cultivation too great a quantity of poor land. They are now ſenſible, that they have employed in this way a portion of labour and dreſſing, which would have produced a permanently better effect, if it had been applied to the further improvement of better land. Even in China, which is ſo fully cultivated and ſo fully peopled, barren heaths have been noticed in ſome diſtricts; which prove, that, diſtreſſed as the people appear to be for ſubſiſtence, it does not anſwer to them to employ any of their manure on ſuch ſpots. Theſe remarks will be ſtill further confirmed, if we recollect, that, in the cultivation of a large ſurface of bad land, there muſt neceſſarily be a very great waſte of ſeed corn.

We ſhould not therefore be too ready to make inferences againſt the internal economy of a country from the appearance of uncultivated heaths, without other evidence. But the fact is, that, as no country has ever reached, or probably ever will reach, its higheſt poſſible acme of produce, it appears always as if the want of induſtry, or the ill-direction of that induſtry.

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duſtry, was the actual limit to a further increaſe of produce and population, and not the abſolute refuſal of nature to yield any more: but a man who is locked up in a room may be fairly ſaid to be confined by the walls of it, though he may never touch them; and with regard to the principle of population, it is never the queſtion, whether a country will produce *any more*, but whether it may be made to produce a ſufficiency to keep pace with an unchecked increaſe of people. In China, the queſtion is not, whether a certain additional quantity of rice might be raiſed by improved culture; but whether ſuch an addition could be expected during the next twenty-five years, as would be ſufficient to ſupport an additional three hundred millions of people. And in this country, it is not the queſtion, whether by cultivating all our commons we could raiſe conſiderably more corn than at preſent; but whether we could raiſe ſufficient for a population of twenty millions in the next twenty-five years, and forty millions in the next fifty years.

The allowing of the produce of the earth to be abſolutely unlimited ſcarcely removes the weight of a hair from the argument; which depends

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pends entirely upon the differently increasing ratios of population and food: and all that the most enlightened governments, and the most persevering and best guided efforts of industry can do, is to make the necessary checks to population operate more equably, and in a direction to produce the least evil; but to remove them is a task absolutely hopeless.

ESSAY, &c.

BOOK IV.

OF OUR FUTURE PROSPECTS RESPECTING THE REMOVAL OR MITIGATION OF THE EVILS ARISING FROM THE PRINCIPLE OF POPULATION.

CHAP. I.

Of moral reſtraint, and our obligation to practiſe this virtue.

As it appears, that, in the actual ſtate of every ſociety which has come within our review, the natural progreſs of population has been conſtantly and powerfully checked; and as it ſeems evident, that no improved form of government, no plans of emigration, no benevolent inſtitutions, and no degree or direction of national induſtry, can prevent the continued action of a great check to population in ſome form or other;

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it follows, that we muſt ſubmit to it as an inevitable law of nature; and the only inquiry that remains is, how it may take place with the leaſt poſſible prejudice to the virtue and happineſs of human ſociety. All the immediate checks to population, which have been obſerved to prevail in the ſame and different countries, ſeem to be reſolvable into moral reſtraint, vice, and miſery; and if our choice be confined to theſe three, we cannot long heſitate in our deciſion reſpecting which it would be moſt eligible to encourage.

In the firſt edition of this eſſay I obſerved, that as from the laws of nature it appeared, that ſome check to population muſt exiſt, it was better that this check ſhould ariſe from a foreſight of the difficulties attending a family, and the fear of dependent poverty, than from the actual preſence of want and ſickneſs. This idea will admit of being purſued further; and I am inclined to think, that, from the prevailing opinions reſpecting population, which undoubtedly originated in barbarous ages, and have been continued and circulated by that part of every community which may be ſuppoſed to be intereſted in their ſupport, we have been prevented from attending

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attending to the clear dictates of reaſon and nature on this ſubject.

Natural and moral evil ſeem to be the inſtruments employed by the Deity in admoniſhing us to avoid any mode of conduct, which is not ſuited to our being, and will conſequently injure our happineſs. If we be intemperate in eating and drinking, we are diſordered; if we indulge the tranſports of anger, we ſeldom fail to commit acts of which we afterwards repent; if we multiply too faſt, we die miſerably of poverty and contagious diſeaſes. The laws of nature in all theſe caſes are ſimilar and uniform. They indicate to us, that we have followed theſe impulſes too far, ſo as to trench upon ſome other law, which equally demands attention. The uneaſineſs we feel from repletion, the injuries that we inflict on ourſelves or others in anger, and the inconveniencies we ſuffer on the approach of poverty, are all admonitions to us to regulate theſe impulſes better; and if we heed not this admonition, we juſtly incur the penalty of our diſobedience, and our ſufferings operate as a warning to others.

From the inattention of mankind hitherto to the conſequences of increaſing too faſt, it muſt be preſumed, that theſe conſequences are not ſo

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immediately and powerfully connected with the conduct which leads to them, as in the other inſtances; but the delayed knowledge of any particular effects does not alter their nature, or our obligation to regulate our conduct accordingly, as ſoon as we are ſatisfied of what this conduct ought to be. In many other inſtances it has not been till after long and painful experience, that the conduct moſt favourable to the happineſs of man has been forced upon his attention. The kind of food, and the mode of preparing it, beſt ſuited to the purpoſes of nutrition and the gratification of the palate; the treatment and remedies of different diſorders; the bad effects on the human frame of low and marſhy ſituations; the invention of the moſt convenient and comfortable clothing; the conſtruction of good houſes; and all the advantages and extended enjoyments, which diſtinguiſh civilized life, were not pointed out to the attention of man at once; but were the ſlow and late reſult of experience, and of the admonitions received by repeated failures.

Diſeaſes have been generally conſidered as the inevitable inflictions of Providence; but perhaps a great part of them may more juſtly be conſidered as indications, that we have offended againſt

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againſt ſome of the laws of nature. The plague at Conſtantinople, and in other towns of the Eaſt, is a conſtant admonition of this kind to the inhabitants. The human conſtitution cannot ſupport ſuch a ſtate of filth and torpor; and as dirt, ſqualid poverty, and indolence, are in the higheſt degree unfavourable to happineſs and virtue, it ſeems a benevolent diſpenſation, that ſuch a ſtate ſhould by the laws of nature produce diſeaſe and death, as a beacon to others to avoid ſplitting on the ſame rock.

The prevalence of the plague in London till the year 1666 operated in a proper manner on the conduct of our anceſtors; and the removal of nuiſances, the conſtruction of drains, the widening of the ſtreets, and the giving more room and air to their houſes, had the effect of eradicating completely this dreadful diſorder, and of adding greatly to the health and happineſs of the inhabitants.

In the hiſtory of every epidemic it has almoſt invariably been obſerved, that the lower claſſes of people, whoſe food was poor and inſufficient, and who lived crowded together in ſmall and dirty houſes, were the principal victims. In what other manner can nature point out to us, that, if we increaſe too faſt for the means of

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ſubſiſtence, ſo as to render it neceſſary for a conſiderable part of the ſociety to live in this miſerable manner, we have offended againſt one of her laws? This law ſhe has declared exactly in the ſame manner, as ſhe declares that intemperance in eating and drinking will be followed by ill health; and that however grateful it may be to us at the moment, to indulge theſe paſſions to exceſs, this indulgence will ultimately produce unhappineſs. It is as much a law of nature, that repletion is bad for the human frame, as that eating and drinking, unattended with this conſequence, are good for it.

An implicit obedience to the impulſes of our natural paſſions would lead us into the wildeſt and moſt fatal extravagancies; and yet we have the ſtrongeſt reaſons for believing, that all theſe paſſions are ſo neceſſary to our being, that they could not be generally weakened or diminiſhed, without injuring our happineſs. The moſt powerful and univerſal of all our deſires is the deſire of food, and of thoſe things, ſuch as clothing, houſes, &c., which are immediately neceſſary to relieve us from the pains of hunger and cold. It is acknowledged by all, that theſe deſires put in motion the greateſt part of that activity, from which the multiplied improvements

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ments and advantages of civilized life are derived; and that the purſuit of theſe objects, and the gratification of theſe deſires, form the principal happineſs of the larger half of mankind, civilized or uncivilized, and are indiſpenſably neceſſary to the more refined enjoyments of the other half. We are all conſcious of the ineſtimable benefits, that we derive from theſe deſires, when directed in a certain manner; but we are equally conſcious of the evils reſulting from them, when not directed in this manner; ſo much ſo, that ſociety has taken upon itſelf to puniſh moſt ſeverely what it conſiders as an irregular gratification of them. And yet the deſires in both caſes are equally natural, and, abſtractedly conſidered, equally virtuous. The act of the hungry man, who ſatisfies his appetite by taking a loaf from the ſhelf of another, is in no reſpect to be diſtinguiſhed from the act of him, who does the ſame thing with a loaf of his own, but by its conſequences. From the conſideration of theſe conſequences, we feel the moſt perfect conviction, that, if people were not prevented from gratifying their natural deſires with the loaves in the poſſeſſion of others, the number of loaves would univerſally diminiſh. This experience is the foundation of the

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laws relating to property, and of the diſtinctions of virtue and vice, in the gratification of deſires, otherwiſe perfectly the ſame.

If the pleaſure ariſing from the gratification of theſe propenſities were univerſally diminiſhed in vividneſs, violations of property would become leſs frequent; but this advantage would be greatly overbalanced by the narrrowing of the ſources of enjoyment. The diminution in the quantity of all thoſe productions, which contribute to human gratification, would be much greater in proportion than the diminution of theſts; and the loſs of general happineſs on the one ſide would be beyond compariſon greater than the gain of happineſs on the other. When we contemplate the conſtant and ſevere toils of the greateſt part of mankind, it is impoſſible not to be forcibly impreſſed with the reflection, that the ſources of human happineſs would be moſt cruelly diminiſhed, if the proſpect of a good meal, a warm houſe, and a comfortable fireſide in the evening, were not incitements ſufficiently vivid, to give intereſt and cheerfulneſs to the labours and privations of the day.

After the deſire of food, the moſt powerful and general of our deſires is the paſſion between the

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the ſexes, taken in an enlarged ſenſe. Of the happineſs ſpread over human life by this paſſion very few are unconſcious. Virtuous love, exalted by friendſhip, ſeems to be that ſort of mixture of ſenſual and intellectual enjoyment, particularly ſuited to the nature of man, and moſt powerfully calculated to awaken the ſympathies of the ſoul, and produce the moſt exquiſite gratifications. Perhaps there is ſcarcely a man, who has once experienced the genuine delight of virtuous love, however great his intellectual pleaſures may have been, that does not look back to the period as the ſunny ſpot in his whole life, where his imagination loves moſt to baſk, which he recollects and contemplates with the fondeſt regret, and which he would moſt wiſh to live over again.

It has been ſaid by Mr. Godwin, in order to ſhow the evident inferiority of the pleaſures of ſenſe, "Strip the commerce of the ſexes of all "its attendant circumſtances, and it would be "generally deſpiſed." He might as well ſay to a man who admired trees, ſtrip them of their ſpreading branches and lovely foliage, and what beauty can you ſee in a bare pole? But it was the tree with the branches and foliage, and not without them, that excited admiration. It is

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" the ſymmetry of perſon, the vivacity, the vo-
" luptuous ſoftneſs of temper, the affectionate
" kindneſs of feeling, the imagination and the
" wit"[a] of a woman, which excite the paſſion of love, and not the mere diſtinction of her being a female.

It is a very great miſtake to ſuppoſe, that the paſſion between the ſexes only operates and influences human conduct, when the immediate gratification of it is in contemplation. The formation and ſteady purſuit of ſome particular plan of life has been juſtly conſidered as one of the moſt permanent ſources of happineſs; but I am inclined to believe, that there are not many of theſe plans formed, that are not connected in a conſiderable degree with the proſpect of the gratification of this paſſion, and with the ſupport of children ariſing from it. The evening meal, the warm houſe, and the comfortable fireſide, would loſe half of their intereſt, if we were to exclude the idea of ſome object of affection, with whom they were to be ſhared.

We have alſo great reaſon to believe, that the paſſion between the ſexes has the moſt powerful tendency to ſoften and meliorate the human character, and keep it more alive to all the

[a] Political Juſtice, vol i, b. i, c. v, p. 72, 8vo.

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kindlier emotions of benevolence and pity. Obſervations on ſavage life have generally tended to prove, that nations, in which this paſſion appeared to be leſs vivid, were diſtinguiſhed by a ferocious and malignant ſpirit, and particularly by tyranny and cruelty to the ſex. If indeed this bond of conjugal affection were conſiderably weakened, it ſeems probable, either that the man would make uſe of his ſuperior phyſical ſtrength, and turn his wife into a ſlave, as among the generality of ſavages; or at beſt, that every little inequality of temper, which muſt neceſſarily occur between two perſons, would produce a total alienation of affection; and this could hardly take place, without a diminution of parental fondneſs and care, which would have the moſt fatal effect on the happineſs of ſociety.

It may be further remarked, that obſervations on the human character in different countries warrant us in the concluſion, that the paſſion is ſtronger, and its general effects in producing gentleneſs, kindneſs, and ſuavity of manners, much more powerful, where obſtacles are thrown in the way of very early and univerſal gratification. In ſome of the ſouthern countries, where every impulſe may be almoſt immediately indulged, the paſſion ſinks into mere animal deſire,

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ſire, is ſoon weakened and almoſt extinguiſhed by exceſs, and its influence on the character is extremely confined. But in European countries, where, though the women be not ſecluded, yet manners have impoſed conſiderable reſtraints on this gratification, the paſſion not only riſes in force, but in the univerſality and beneficial tendency of its effects; and has often the moſt influence in the formation and improvement of the character, where it is the leaſt gratified.

Conſidering then the paſſion between the ſexes in all its bearings and relations, and including the endearing engagement of parent and child reſulting from it, few will be diſpoſed to deny, that it is one of the principal ingredients of human happineſs. Yet experience teaches us, that much evil flows from the irregular gratification of it; and though the evil be of little weight in the ſcale, when compared with the good, yet its abſolute quantity cannot be inconſiderable, on account of the ſtrength and univerſality of the paſſion. It is evident however, from the general conduct of all governments in their diſtribution of puniſhments, that the evil reſulting from this cauſe is not ſo great and ſo immediately dangerous to ſociety, as the irregular gratification of the deſire of property; but placing

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placing this evil in the moſt formidable point of view, we ſhould evidently purchaſe a diminution of it at a very dear price, by the extinction or diminution of the paſſion which cauſes it; a change, which would probably convert human life either into a cold and cheerleſs blank, or a ſcene of ſavage and mercileſs ferocity.

A careful attention to the remote as well as immediate effects of all the human paſſions, and all the general laws of nature, leads us ſtrongly to the concluſion, that, under the preſent conſtitution of things, few or none of them would admit of being greatly diminiſhed, without narrowing the ſources of good, more powerfully than the ſources of evil. And the reaſon ſeems to be obvious. They are, in fact, the materials of all our pleaſures, as well as of all our pains; of all our happineſs, as well as of all our miſery; of all our virtues, as well as of all our vices. It muſt therefore be regulation and direction that are wanted, not diminution or extinction.

It is juſtly obſerved by Dr. Paley, that "Human paſſions are either neceſſary to human "welfare, or capable of being made, and in a "great majority of inſtances, are in fact, made "conducive to its happineſs. Theſe paſſions are "ſtrong and general; and perhaps would not "anſwer

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" anſwer their purpoſe, unleſs they were ſo. " But ſtrength and generality, when it is expe- " dient that particular circumſtances ſhould be " reſpected, become, if left to themſelves, exceſs " and miſdirection. From which exceſs and " miſdirection the vices of mankind (the cauſes " no doubt of much miſery) appear to ſpring. " This account, while it ſhows us the principle " of vice, ſhows us at the ſame time the pro- " vince of reaſon and ſelf-government."[a]

Our virtue therefore, as reaſonable beings, evidently conſiſts in educing from the general materials, which the Creator has placed under our guidance, the greateſt ſum of human happineſs; and as natural impulſes are abſtractedly conſidered good, and only to be diſtinguiſhed by their conſequences, a ſtrict attention to theſe conſequences, and the regulation of our conduct conformably to them, muſt be conſidered as our principal duty.

The fecundity of the human ſpecies is, in ſome reſpects, a diſtinct conſideration from the paſſion between the ſexes, as it evidently depends more upon the power of women in bearing children, than upon the ſtrength or weakneſs of this paſſion. It is however a law ex-

[a] Natural Theology, c. xxvi, p. 547.

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actly ſimilar in its great features to all the other laws of nature. It is ſtrong and general, and apparently would not admit of any very conſiderable diminution, without being inadequate to its object; the evils ariſing from it are incidental to theſe neceſſary qualities of ſtrength and generality; and theſe evils are capable of being very greatly mitigated, and rendered comparatively light, by human energy and virtue. We cannot but conceive, that it is an object of the Creator, that the earth ſhould be repleniſhed; and it appears to me clear, that this could not be effected without a tendency in population to increaſe faſter than food; and as with the preſent law of increaſe, the peopling of the earth does not proceed very rapidly, we have undoubtedly ſome reaſon to believe, that this law is not too powerful for its apparent object. The deſire of the means of ſubſiſtence would be comparatively confined in its effects, and would fail of producing that general activity ſo neceſſary to the improvement of the human faculties, were it not for the ſtrong and univerſal effort of population, to increaſe with greater rapidity than its ſupplies. If theſe two tendencies were exactly balanced, I do not ſee what motive there would be

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be ſufficiently ſtrong, to overcome the acknowledged indolence of man, and make him proceed in the cultivation of the ſoil. The population of any large territory, however fertile, would be as likely to ſtop at five hundred, or five thouſand, as at five millions, or fifty millions. Such a balance therefore would clearly defeat one great purpoſe of creation; and if the queſtion be merely a queſtion of degree, a queſtion of a little more or a little leſs ſtrength, we may fairly diſtruſt our competence to judge of the preciſe quantity neceſſary to anſwer the object with the ſmalleſt ſum of incidental evil. In the preſent ſtate of things we appear to have under our guidance a great power, capable of peopling a deſert region in a ſmall number of years; and yet, under other circumſtances, capable of being confined by human energy and virtue to any limits however narrow, at the expenſe of a ſmall comparative quantity of evil. The analogy of all the other laws of nature would be completely violated, if in this inſtance alone there were no proviſion for accidental failures, no reſources againſt the vices of mankind, or the partial miſchiefs reſulting from other general laws. To effect the apparent object without any attendant evil, it is evident, that a perpetual change

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change in the law of increaſe would be neceſſary, varying with the varying circumſtances of each country. But inſtead of this, it is not only more conſonant to the analogy of the other parts of nature, but we have reaſon to think, that it is more conducive to the formation and improvement of the human mind, that the law ſhould be uniform, and the evils incidental to it, under certain circumſtances, be left to be mitigated or removed by man himſelf. His duties in this caſe vary with his ſituation; and he is thus kept more alive to the conſequences of his actions, and his faculties have evidently greater play and opportunity of improvement, than if the evil were removed by a perpetual change of the law according to circumſtances.

Even if from paſſions too eaſily ſubdued, or the facility of illicit intercourſe, a ſtate of celibacy were a matter of indifference, and not a ſtate of ſome privation, the end of nature in the peopling of the earth would be apparently liable to be defeated. It is of the very utmoſt importance to the happineſs of mankind, that they ſhould not increaſe too faſt; but it does not appear, that the object to be accompliſhed would admit of any very conſiderable diminution in the deſire of marriage. It is clearly the duty of

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each individual not to marry, till he has a proſpect of ſupporting his children; but it is at the ſame time to be wiſhed, that he ſhould retain undiminiſhed his deſire of marriage, in order that he may exert himſelf to realize this proſpect, and be ſtimulated to make proviſion for the ſupport of greater numbers.

It is evidently therefore regulation and direction, that are required with regard to the principle of population, not diminution or alteration. And if moral reſtraint be the only virtuous mode of avoiding the incidental evils ariſing from this principle, our obligation to practiſe it will evidently reſt exactly upon the ſame foundation, as our obligation to practiſe any of the other virtues, the foundation of utility.

Whatever indulgence we may be diſpoſed to allow to occaſional failures in the diſcharge of a duty of acknowledged difficulty, yet of the ſtrict line of duty we cannot doubt. Our obligation not to marry till we have a fair proſpect of being able to ſupport our children will appear to deſerve the attention of the moraliſt, if it can be proved, that an attention to this obligation is of moſt powerful effect in the prevention of miſery; and that, if it were the general cuſtom to follow the firſt impulſe of nature,

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nature, and marry at the age of puberty, the univerſal prevalence of every known virtue, in the greateſt conceivable degree, would fail of reſcuing ſociety from the moſt wretched and deſperate ſtate of want, and all the diſeaſes and famines, which uſually accompany it.

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CHAP. II.

Of the Effects which would result to Society from the prevalence of this virtue.

ONE of the principal reaſons, which have prevented an aſſent to the doctrine of the conſtant tendency of population to increaſe beyond the means of ſubſiſtence, is a great unwillingneſs to believe, that the Deity would by the laws of nature bring beings into exiſtence, which by the laws of nature could not be ſupported in that exiſtence. But if in addition to that general activity and direction of our induſtry put in motion by theſe laws, we further conſider, that the incidental evils ariſing from them are conſtantly directing our attention to the proper check to population, moral reſtraint; and if it appear, that, by a ſtrict obedience to thoſe duties, which are pointed out to us by the light of nature and reaſon, and are confirmed and ſanctioned by revelation, theſe evils may be avoided; the objection will, I truſt, be removed, and all apparent imputation on the goodneſs of the Deity be done away.

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The heathen moraliſts never repreſented happineſs as attainable on earth, but through the medium of virtue; and among their virtues prudence ranked in the firſt claſs, and by ſome was even conſidered as including every other. The chriſtian religion places our preſent as well as future happineſs in the exerciſe of thoſe virtues, which tend to fit us for a ſtate of ſuperior enjoyment; and the ſubjection of the paſſions to the guidance of reaſon, which, if not the whole, is a principal branch of prudence, is in conſequence moſt particularly inculcated.

If for the ſake of illuſtration, we might be permitted to draw a picture of ſociety, in which each individual endeavoured to attain happineſs by the ſtrict fulfilment of thoſe duties, which the moſt enlightened of the ancient philoſophers deduced from the laws of nature, and which have been directly taught, and received ſuch powerful ſanctions in the moral code of Chriſtianity, it would preſent a very different ſcene, from that which we now contemplate. Every act, which was prompted by the deſire of immediate gratification, but which threatened an ultimate overbalance of pain, would be conſidered as a breach of duty; and conſequently no man, whoſe earnings were only ſufficient to maintain

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two children, would put himself in a situation in which he might have to maintain four or five, however he might be prompted to it by the passion of love. This prudential restraint, if it were generally adopted, by narrowing the supply of labour in the market, would, in the natural course of things, soon raise its price. The period of delayed gratification would be passed in saving the earnings, which were above the wants of a single man, and in acquiring habits of sobriety, industry, and economy, which would enable him in a few years to enter into the matrimonial contract without fear of its consequences. The operation of the preventive check in this way, by constantly keeping the population within the limits of the food, though constantly following its increase, would give a real value to the rise of wages, and the sums saved by labourers before marriage, very different from those forced advances in the price of labour, or arbitrary parochial donations, which, in proportion to their magnitude and extensiveness, must of necessity be followed by a proportional advance in the price of provisions. As the wages of labour would thus be sufficient, to maintain with decency a large family, and as every married couple would set out with a sum

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for contingencies, all ſqualid poverty would be removed from ſociety; or at leaſt be confined to a very few, who had fallen into misfortunes, againſt which no prudence or foreſight could provide.

The interval between the age of puberty and the period at which each individual might venture on marriage muſt, according to the ſuppoſition, be paſſed in ſtrict chaſtity; becauſe the law of chaſtity cannot be violated without producing evil. The effect of any thing like a promiſcuous intercourſe, which prevents the birth of children, is evidently to weaken the beſt affections of the heart, and in a very marked manner to degrade the female character. And any other intercourſe would, without improper arts, bring as many children into the ſociety as marriage, with a much greater probability of their becoming a burden to it.

Theſe conſiderations ſhow, that the virtue of chaſtity is not, as ſome have ſuppoſed, a forced produce of artificial ſociety; but that it has the moſt real and ſolid foundation in nature and reaſon; being apparently the only virtuous mean of avoiding the vice and miſery, which reſult ſo often from the principle of population.

In ſuch a ſociety as we have been ſuppoſing,

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it might be neceſſary for both ſexes, to paſs many of the early years of life in the ſingle ſtate; and if this were general, there would certainly be room for a much greater number to marry afterwards, ſo that fewer, upon the whole, would be condemned to paſs their lives in celibacy. If the cuſtom of not marrying early prevailed generally, and if violations of chaſtity were equally diſhonourable in both ſexes, a more familiar and friendly intercourſe between them might take place without danger. Two young people might converſe together intimately, without its being immediately ſuppoſed, that they either intended marriage or intrigue; and a much better opportunity would thus be given to both ſexes of finding out kindred diſpoſitions, and of forming thoſe ſtrong and laſting attachments, without which the married ſtate is generally more productive of miſery than of happineſs. The earlier years of life would not be ſpent without love, though without the full gratification of it. The paſſion, inſtead of being extinguiſhed, as it now too frequently is by early ſenſuality, would only be repreſſed for a time, that it might afterwards burn with a brighter, purer, and ſteadier flame; and the happineſs of the married ſtate, inſtead of an opportunity of immediate

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immediate indulgence, would be looked forward to as the prize of induſtry and virtue, and the reward of a genuine and conſtant attachment[a].

The paſſion of love is a powerful ſtimulus in the formation of character, and often prompts to the moſt noble and generous exertions; but this is only when the affections are centred in one object; and generally when full gratification is delayed by difficulties.[b] The heart

[a] Dr. Currie, in his intereſting obſervations on the character and condition of the Scotch peaſantry, which he has prefixed to his life of Burns, remarks, with a juſt knowledge of human nature, that, "in appreciating the happineſs and virtue "of a community, there is perhaps no ſingle criterion on "which ſo much dependence may be placed as the ſtate of "the intercourſe between the ſexes. Where this diſplays "ardour of attachment, accompanied by purity of conduct, "the character and the influence of women riſe, our imper-"fect nature mounts in the ſcale of moral excellence; and "from the ſource of this ſingle affection, a ſtream of felicity "deſcends, which branches into a thouſand rivulets, that en-"rich and adorn the field of life. Where the attachment "between the ſexes ſinks into an appetite, the heritage of "our ſpecies is comparatively poor, and man approaches to "the condition of the brutes that periſh." Vol. i, p. 18.

[b] Dr. Currie obſerves, that the Scottiſh peaſant in the courſe of his paſſion often exerts a ſpirit of adventure, of which a Spaniſh cavalier need not be aſhamed. Burns' Works, vol. i, p. 16. It is not to be doubted, that this kind of romantic paſſion, which, Dr. C. ſays, characterizes the attachment

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heart is perhaps never ſo much diſpoſed to virtuous conduct, and certainly at no time is the virtue of chaſtity ſo little difficult to men, as when under the influence of ſuch a paſſion. Late marriages taking place in this way would be very different from thoſe of the ſame name at preſent, where the union is too frequently prompted ſolely by intereſted views, and the parties meet not unfrequently with exhauſted conſtitutions, and generally with exhauſted affections. The late marriages at preſent are indeed principally confined to the men; and there are few, however advanced in life they may be, who, if they determine to marry, do not fix their choice on a very young wife. A young woman without fortune, when ſhe has paſſed her twenty-fifth year, begins to fear, and with reaſon, that ſhe may lead a life of celibacy; and with a heart capable of forming a ſtrong attachment, feels as each year creeps on her hopes of finding an object on which to reſt her affections gradually diminiſhing, and the uneaſineſs of her ſituation aggravated by the ſilly and un-

tachment of the humbleſt people of Scotland, and which has been greatly foſtered by the elevation of mind given to them by a ſuperior education, has had a moſt powerful and moſt beneficial influence on the national character.

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juſt prejudices of the world. If the general age of marriage among women were later, the period of youth and hope would be prolonged, and fewer would be ultimately diſappointed.

That a change of this kind would be a moſt decided advantage to the more virtuous half of ſociety, we cannot for a moment doubt. However impatiently the privation might be borne by the men, it would be ſupported by the women readily and cheerfully; and if they could look forwards with juſt confidence to marriage at twenty-eight or thirty, I fully believe, that, if the matter were left to their free choice, they would clearly prefer waiting till this period, to the being involved in all the cares of a large family at twenty five. The moſt eligible age of marriage however could not be fixed; but muſt depend entirely on circumſtances and ſituation. There is no period of human life, at which nature more ſtrongly prompts to an union of the ſexes, than from ſeventeen or eighteen to twenty. In every ſociety above that ſtate of depreſſion, which almoſt excludes reaſon and foreſight, theſe early tendencies muſt neceſſarily be reſtrained; and if, in the actual ſtate of things, ſuch a reſtraint on the impulſes of nature be found unavoidable, at what time can we be conſiſtently

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conſiſtently releaſed from it, but at that period, whatever it may be, when, in the exiſting circumſtances of the ſociety, a fair proſpect preſents itſelf of maintaining a family?

The difficulty of moral reſtraint will perhaps be objected to this doctrine. To him who does not acknowledge the authority of the Chriſtian religion, I have only to ſay, that, after the moſt careful inveſtigation, this virtue appears to be abſolutely neceſſary, in order to avoid certain evils, which would otherwiſe reſult from the general laws of nature. According to his own principles, it is his duty to purſue the greateſt good conſiſtent with theſe laws; and not to fail in this important end, and produce an overbalance of miſery, by a partial obedience to ſome of the dictates of nature, while he neglects others. The path of virtue, though it be the only path which leads to permanent happineſs, has always been repreſented by the heathen moraliſts as of difficult aſcent.

To the Chriſtian I would ſay, that the Scriptures moſt clearly and preciſely point it out to us as our duty, to reſtrain our paſſions within the bounds of reaſon; and it is a palpable diſobedience of this law, to indulge our deſires in ſuch a manner as reaſon tells us will unavoidably end

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end in miſery. The Chriſtian cannot conſider the difficulty of moral reſtraint as any argument againſt its being his duty; ſince in almoſt every page of the ſacred writings, man is deſcribed as encompaſſed on all ſides by temptations, which it is extremely difficult to reſiſt; and though no duties are enjoined, which do not contribute to his happineſs on earth as well as in a future ſtate, yet an undeviating obedience is never repreſented as an eaſiy taſk.

There is in general ſo ſtrong a tendency to love in early youth, that it is extremely difficult at this period to diſtinguiſh a genuine from a tranſient paſſion. If the earlier years of life were paſſed by both ſexes in moral reſtraint, from the greater facility that this would give to the meeting of kindred diſpoſitions, it might even admit of a doubt, whether more happy marriages would not take place, and conſequently more pleaſure from the paſſion of love, than in a ſtate ſuch as that of America, the circumſtances of which would allow of a very early union of the ſexes. But if we compare the intercourſe of the ſexes in ſuch a ſociety as I have been ſuppoſing, with that which now exiſts in Europe, taken under all its circumſtances, it may ſafely be aſſerted, that, independently of the load

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of misery which would be removed, the sum of pleasurable sensations from the passion of love would be increased in a very great degree.

If we could suppose such a system general, the accession of happiness to society in its internal economy would scarcely be greater than in its external relations. It might fairly be expected, that war, that great pest of the human race, would, under such circumstances, soon cease to extend its ravages so widely and so frequently, as it does at present.

One of its first causes and most powerful impulses was undoubtedly an insufficiency of room and food; and greatly as the circumstances of mankind have changed since it first began, the same cause still continues to operate and to produce, though in a smaller degree, the same effects. The ambition of princes would want instruments of destruction, if the distresses of the lower classes of people did not drive them under their standards. A recruiting serjeant always prays for a bad harvest, and a want of employment, or in other words, a redundant population.

In the earlier ages of the world, when war was the great business of mankind, and the drains

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drains of population from this cauſe were, beyond compariſon, greater than in modern times, the legiſlators and ſtateſmen of each country, adverting principally to the means of offence and defence, encouraged an increaſe of people in every poſſible way, fixed a ſtigma on barrenneſs and celibacy, and honoured marriage. The popular religions followed theſe prevailing opinions. In many countries the prolific power of nature was the object of ſolemn worſhip. In the religion of Mahomet, which was eſtabliſhed by the ſword, and the promulgation of which in conſequence could not be unaccompanied by an extraordinary deſtruction of its followers, the procreation of children to glorify the Creator was laid down as one of the principal duties of man; and he, who had the moſt numerous offſpring, was conſidered as having beſt anſwered the end of his creation. The prevalence of ſuch moral ſentiments had naturally a great effect in encouraging marriage; and the rapid procreation, which followed, was partly the effect and partly the cauſe of inceſſant war. The vacancies occaſioned by former deſolations made room for the rearing of freſh ſupplies; and the overflowing rapidity, with which theſe ſupplies followed, conſtantly furniſhed freſh incitements

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and freſh inſtruments for renewed hoſtilities. Under the influence of ſuch moral ſentiments it is difficult to conceive how the fury of inceſſant war ſhould ever abate.

It is a pleaſing confirmation of the truth and divinity of the Chriſtian religion, and of its being adapted to a more improved ſtate of human ſociety, that it places our duties reſpecting marriage and the procreation of children in a different light from that in which they were before beheld.

Without entering minutely into the ſubject, which would evidently lead too far, I think it will be admitted, that, if we apply the ſpirit of St. Paul's declarations reſpecting marriage to the preſent ſtate of ſociety, and the known conſtitution of our nature, the natural inference ſeems to be, that, when marriage does not interfere with higher duties, it is right; when it does, it is wrong. According to the genuine principles of moral ſcience, "The method of coming at "the will of God from the light of nature is, to "inquire into the tendency of the action to "promote or diminiſh the general happineſs."[a] There are perhaps few actions, that tend ſo directly to diminiſh the general happineſs, as to

[a] Paley's Moral Philoſophy, vol. i, b. ii, c. iv, p. 65.

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marry without the means of ſupporting children. He who commits this act, therefore, clearly offends againſt the will of God; and having become a burden on the ſociety in which he lives, and plunged himſelf and family into a ſituation, in which virtuous habits are preſerved with more difficulty than in any other, he appears to have violated his duty to his neighbours and to himſelf, and thus to have liſtened to the voice of paſſion in oppoſition to his higher obligations.

In a ſociety, ſuch as I have ſuppoſed, all the members of which endeavour to attain happineſs by obedience to the moral code derived from the light of nature, and enforced by ſtrong ſanctions in revealed religion, it is evident, that no ſuch marriages could take place; and the prevention of a redundant population, in this way, would remove one of the principal encouragements to offenſive war; and at the ſame time tend powerfully to eradicate thoſe two fatal political diſorders, internal tyranny and internal tumult, which mutually produce each other.

Indiſpoſed to a war of offence, in a war of defence, ſuch a ſociety would be ſtrong as a rock of adamant. Where every family poſſeſſed

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the neceſſaries of life in plenty, and a decent portion of its comforts and conveniences, there could not exiſt that hope of change, or at beſt that melancholy and diſheartening indifference to it, which ſometimes prompts the lower claſſes of people to ſay, "let what will come, we can-"not be worſe off than we are now." Every heart and hand would be united to repel an invader, when each individual felt the value of the ſolid advantages which he enjoyed, and a proſpect of change preſented only a proſpect of being deprived of them.

As it appears therefore, that it is in the power of each individual to avoid all the evil conſequences to himſelf and ſociety reſulting from the principle of population, by the practice of a virtue clearly dictated to him by the light of nature, and expreſsly enjoined in revealed religion; and as we have reaſon to think, that the exerciſe of this virtue to a certain degree would tend rather to increaſe than diminiſh individual happiness; we can have no reaſon to impeach the juſtice of the Deity, becauſe his general laws make this virtue neceſſary, and puniſh our offences againſt it by the evils attendant upon vice, and the pains that accompany the various forms of premature death. A really virtuous

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ſociety, ſuch as I have ſuppoſed, would avoid theſe evils. It is the apparent object of the Creator to deter us from vice by the pains which accompany it, and to lead us to virtue by the happineſs that it produces. This object appears to our conceptions to be worthy of a benevolent Creator. The laws of nature reſpecting population tend to promote this object. No imputation, therefore, on the benevolence of the Deity, can be founded on theſe laws, which is not equally applicable to any of the evils neceſſarily incidental to an imperfect ſtate of exiſtence.

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CHAP. III.

Of the only effectual mode of improving the condition of the Poor.

He who publiſhes a moral code, or ſyſtem of duties, however firmly he may be convinced of the ſtrong obligation on each individual ſtrictly to conform to it, has never the folly to imagine, that it will be univerſally or even generally practiſed. But this is no valid objection againſt the publication of the code. If it were, the ſame objection would always have applied; we ſhould be totally without general rules; and to the vices of mankind ariſing from temptation would be added a much longer liſt, than we have at preſent, of vices from ignorance.

Judging merely from the light of nature, if we feel convinced of the miſery ariſing from a redundant population on the one hand, and of the evils and unhappineſs, particularly to the female ſex, ariſing from promiſcuous intercourſe, on the other, I do not ſee how it is poſſible for any perſon, who acknowledges the principle of utility

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utility as the great foundation of morals, to escape the conclusion, that moral restraint, or the abstaining from marriage till we are in a condition to support a family, with a perfectly moral conduct during that period, is the strict line of duty; and when revelation is taken into the question, this duty undoubtedly receives very powerful confirmation. At the same time I believe, that few of my readers can be less sanguine in their expectations of any great change in the general conduct of men on this subject, than I am: and the chief reason why in the last chapter I allowed myself to suppose the universal prevalence of this virtue was, that I might endeavour to remove any imputation on the goodness of the Deity, by showing, that the evils arising from the principle of population were exactly of the same nature as the generality of other evils, which excite fewer complaints; that they were increased by human ignorance and indolence, and diminished by human knowledge and virtue; and on the supposition, that each individual strictly fulfilled his duty, would be almost totally removed; and this without any general diminution of those sources of pleasure, arising from the regulated indulgence of the passions, which have been

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juſtly conſidered as the principal ingredients of human happineſs.

If it will anſwer any purpoſe of illuſtration, I ſee no harm in drawing the picture of a ſociety, in which each individual is ſuppoſed ſtrictly to fulfil his duties; nor does a writer appear to be juſtly liable to the imputation of being viſionary, unleſs he make ſuch univerſal or general obedience neceſſary to the practical utility of his ſyſtem, and to that degree of moderate and partial improvement, which is all that can rationally be expected from the moſt complete knowledge of our duties.

But in this reſpect there is an eſſential difference between that improved ſtate of ſociety, which I have ſuppoſed in the laſt chapter, and moſt of the other ſpeculations on this ſubject. The improvement there ſuppoſed, if we ever ſhould make approaches towards it, is to be effected in the way in which we have been in the habit of ſeeing all the greateſt improvements effected, by a direct application to the intereſt and happineſs of each individual. It is not required of us, to act from motives, to which we are unaccuſtomed; to purſue a general good, which we may not diſtinctly comprehend, or the effect of which may be weakened by diſtance

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tance and diffuſion. The happineſs of the whole is to be the reſult of the happineſs of individuals, and to begin firſt with them. No cooperation is required. Every ſtep tells. He who performs his duty faithfully will reap the full fruits of it, whatever may be the number of others who fail. This duty is intelligible to the humbleſt capacity. It is merely, that he is not to bring beings into the world, for whom he cannot find the means of ſupport. When once this ſubject is cleared from the obſcurity thrown over it by parochial laws and private benevolence, every man muſt feel the ſtrongeſt conviction of ſuch an obligation. If he cannot ſupport his children, they muſt ſtarve; and if he marry in the face of a fair probability, that he ſhall not be able to ſupport his children, he is guilty of all the evils, which he thus brings upon himſelf, his wife, and his offſpring. It is clearly his intereſt, and will tend greatly to promote his happineſs, to defer marrying, till by induſtry and economy he is in a capacity to ſupport the children, that he may reaſonably expect from his marriage; and as he cannot in the mean time gratify his paſſions, without violating an expreſs command of God, and running a great riſk of injuring himſelf,

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or ſome of his fellow creatures, conſiderations of his own intereſt and happineſs will dictate to him the ſtrong obligation to a moral conduct, while he remains unmarried.

However powerful may be the impulſes of paſſion, they are generally in ſome degree modified by reaſon. And it does not ſeem entirely viſionary to ſuppoſe, that, if the true and permanent cauſe of poverty were clearly explained, and forcibly brought home to each man's boſom, it would have ſome, and perhaps not an inconſiderable influence on his conduct: at leaſt the experiment has never yet been fairly tried. Almoſt every thing, that has been hitherto done for the poor, has tended, as if with ſolicitous care, to throw a veil of obſcurity over this ſubject, and to hide from them the true cauſe of their poverty. When the wages of labour are hardly ſufficient to maintain two children, a man marries, and has five or ſix. He of courſe finds himſelf miſerably diſtreſſed. He accuſes the inſufficiency of the price of labour to maintain a family. He accuſes his pariſh for their tardy and ſparing fulfilment of their obligation to aſſiſt him. He accuſes the avarice of the rich, who ſuffer him to want what they can ſo well ſpare. He accuſes the partial and unjuſt inſti-

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tutions of ſociety, which have awarded him an inadequate ſhare of the produce of the earth. He accuſes perhaps the diſpenſations of Providence, which have aſſigned to him a place in ſociety ſo beſet with unavoidable diſtreſs and dependance. In ſearching for objects of accuſation, he never adverts to the quarter, from which his misfortunes originate. The laſt perſon that he would think of accuſing is himſelf, on whom in fact the principal blame lies, except in as far as he has been deceived by the higher claſſes of ſociety. He may perhaps wiſh, that he had not married, becauſe he now feels the inconveniences of it; but it never enters into his head, that he can have done any thing wrong He has always been told, that to raiſe up ſubjects for his king and country is a very meritorious act. He has done this act, and yet is ſuffering for it. He naturally thinks, that he is ſuffering for righteouſneſs ſake; and it cannot but ſtrike him as moſt extremely unjuſt and cruel in his king and country, to allow him thus to ſuffer, in return for giving them what they are continually declaring that they particularly want.

Till theſe erroneous ideas have been corrected, and the language of nature and reaſon has

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has been generally heard on the ſubject of population, inſtead of the language of error and prejudice, it cannot be ſaid, that any fair experiment has been made with the underſtandings of the common people; and we cannot juſtly accuſe them of improvidence and want of induſtry, till they act as they do now, after it has been brought home to their comprehenſions, that they are themſelves the cauſe of their own poverty; that the means of redreſs are in their own hands, and in the hands of no other perſons whatever; that the ſociety in which they live, and the government which preſides over it, are without any direct power in this reſpect; and, however ardently they may deſire to relieve them, and whatever attempts they may make to do ſo, are really and truly unable to execute what they benevolently wiſh, but unjuſtly promiſe; that when the wages of labour will not maintain a family, it is an incontrovertible ſign, that their king and country do not want more ſubjects, or at leaſt that they cannot ſupport them; that if they marry in this caſe, ſo far from fulfilling a duty to ſociety, they are throwing a uſeleſs burden on it, at the ſame time that they are plunging themſelves into diſtreſs; and that they are acting directly contrary

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trary to the will of God, and bringing down upon themſelves various diſeaſes, which might all, or the greater part, have been avoided, if they had attended to the repeated admonitions, which he gives by the general laws of nature to every being capable of reaſon.

Dr. Paley, in his Moral Philoſophy, obſerves, that "in countries in which ſubſiſtence is be- "come ſcarce, it behoves the ſtate to watch "over the public morals with increaſed ſolici- "tude; for nothing but the inſtinct of nature, "under the reſtraint of chaſtity, will induce "men to undertake the labour, or conſent to "the ſacrifice of perſonal liberty and indul- "gence, which the ſupport of a family in ſuch "circumſtances requires[a]." That it is always the duty of a ſtate, to uſe every exertion likely to be effectual in diſcouraging vice and promoting virtue, and that no temporary circumſtances ought to cauſe any relaxation in theſe exertions, is certainly true. The means therefore propoſed are always good; but the particular end in view in this caſe appears to be abſolutely criminal. We wiſh to force people into marriage, when from the acknowledged ſcarcity of ſubſiſtence they will have little

[a] Vol. ii, c. xi, p. 352.

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chance of being able to ſupport their children. We might as well force people into the water, who are unable to ſwim. In both caſes we raſhly tempt Providence. Nor have we more reaſon to believe, that a miracle will be worked to ſave us from the miſery and mortality reſulting from our conduct in the one caſe, than in the other.

The object of thoſe, who really wiſh to better the condition of the lower claſſes of ſociety, muſt be to raiſe the relative proportion between the price of labour and the price of proviſions, ſo as to enable the labourer to command a larger ſhare of the neceſſaries and comforts of life. We have hitherto principally attempted to attain this end by encouraging the married poor, and conſequently increaſing the number of labourers, and overſtocking the market with a commodity, which we ſtill ſay that we wiſh to be dear. It would ſeem to have required no great ſpirit of divination, to foretel the certain failure of ſuch a plan of proceeding. There is nothing however like experience. It has been tried in many different countries, and for many hundred years, and the ſucceſs has always been anſwerable to the nature of the ſcheme. It is really time now to try ſomething elſe.

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When it was found, that oxygene, or pure vital air, would not cure conſumptions, as was expected, but rather aggravated their ſymptoms; a trial was made of an air of the moſt oppoſite kind. I wiſh we had acted with the ſame philoſophical ſpirit in our attempts to cure the diſeaſe of poverty; and having found, that the pouring in of freſh ſupplies of labour only tended to aggravate the ſymtoms, had tried what would be the effect of withholding a little theſe ſupplies.

In all old and fully-peopled ſtates it is from this method, and this alone, that we can rationally expect any eſſential and permanent melioration in the condition of the lower claſſes of people.

In an endeavour to raiſe the proportion of the quantity of proviſions to the number of conſumers in any country, our attention would naturally be firſt directed to the increaſing of the abſolute quantity of proviſions; but finding, that, as faſt as we did this, the number of conſumers more than kept pace with it, and that with all our exertions we were ſtill as far as ever behind, we ſhould be convinced, that our efforts directed only in this way would never ſucceed. It would appear to be ſetting the tortoiſe to catch

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the hare. Finding therefore, that from the laws of nature we could not proportion the food to the population, our next attempt ſhould naturally be, to proportion the population to the food. If we can perſuade the hare to go to ſleep, the tortoiſe may have ſome chance of overtaking her.

We are not however to relax our efforts in increaſing the quantity of proviſions; but to combine another effort with it, that of keeping the population, when once it has been overtaken, at ſuch a diſtance behind, as to effect the relative proportion which we deſire; and thus unite the two grand deſiderata, a great actual population, and a ſtate of ſociety, in which ſqualid poverty and dependence are comparatively but little known; two objects which are far from being incompatible.

If we be really ſerious in what appears to be the object of ſuch general reſearch, the mode of eſſentially and permanently bettering the condition of the poor, we muſt explain to them the true nature of their ſituation, and ſhow them, that the withholding of the ſupplies of labour is the only poſſible way of really raiſing its price; and that they themſelves, being the poſſeſſors of this

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this commodity, have alone the power to do this.

I cannot but conſider this mode of diminiſhing poverty as ſo perfectly clear in theory, and ſo invariably confirmed by the analogy of every other commodity that is brought to market, that nothing, but its being ſhown to be calculated to produce greater evils than it propoſes to remedy, can juſtify us in not making the attempt to put it into execution.

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CHAP. VI.

Objections to this mode conſidered.

ONE objection, which perhaps will be made to this plan, is that from which alone it derives its value—a market rather underſtocked with labour. This muſt undoubtedly take place in a certain degree; but by no means in ſuch a degree, as to affect the wealth and proſperity of the country. The way in which we are going on at preſent, and the enormous increaſe in the price of proviſions, which ſeems to threaten us, will tend much more effectually to enable foreigners to underſell us in the markets of Europe, than the plan now propoſed. If the population of this country were better proportioned to its food, the nominal price of labour might be lower than it is now, and yet be ſufficient to maintain a wife and ſix children. But putting this ſubject of a market underſtocked with labour in the moſt unfavourable point of view, if the rich will not ſubmit to a ſlight inconvenience neceſſarily attendant on the attainment

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ment of what they profeſs to deſire, they cannot really be in earneſt in their profeſſions. Their benevolence to the poor muſt be either childiſh play or hypocriſy; it muſt be either to amuſe themſelves, or to pacify the minds of the common people with a mere ſhow of attention to their wants. To wiſh to better the condition of the poor by enabling them to command a greater quantity of the neceſſaries and comforts of life, and then to complain of high wages, is the act of a ſilly boy, who gives away his cake and then cries for it. A market overſtocked with labour, and an ample remuneration to each labourer, are objects perfectly incompatible with each other. In the annals of the world they never exiſted together; and to couple them even in imagination betrays a groſs ignorance of the ſimpleſt principles of political economy.

A ſecond objection that may be made to this plan is, the diminution of population that it would cauſe. It is to be conſidered however, that this diminution is merely relative; and when once this relative diminution had been effected, by keeping the population ſtationary, while the ſupply of food had increaſed, it might then ſtart afreſh, and continue increaſing for ages, with the

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increaſe of food, maintaining always the ſame relative proportion to it. I can eaſily conceive, that this country, with a proper direction of the national induſtry, might, in the courſe of ſome centuries, contain two or three times its preſent population, and yet every man in the kingdom be much better fed and clothed than he is at preſent. While the ſprings of induſtry continue in vigour, and a ſufficient part of that induſtry is directed to agriculture, we need be under no apprehenſions of a deficient population; and nothing perhaps would tend ſo ſtrongly to excite a ſpirit of induſtry and economy among the poor, as a thorough knowledge, that their happineſs muſt always depend principally upon themſelves; and that, if they obey their paſſions in oppoſition to their reaſon, or be not induſtrious and frugal while they are ſingle men, to ſave a ſum for the common contingencies of the married ſtate, they muſt expect to ſuffer the natural evils, which Providence has prepared for thoſe who diſobey its repeated admonitions.

A third objection which may be ſtarted to this plan, and the only one which appears to me to have any kind of plauſibility, is, that by endeavouring to urge the duty of moral reſtraint

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on the poor, we may increaſe the quantity of vice relating to the ſex.

I ſhould be extremely ſorry to ſay any thing, which could either directly or remotely be conſtrued unfavourably to the cauſe of virtue; but I certainly cannot think, that the vices which relate to the ſex are the only vices, which are to be conſidered in a moral queſtion; or that they are even the greateſt and moſt degrading to the human character. They can rarely or never be committed without producing unhappineſs ſomewhere or other, and therefore ought always to be ſtrongly reprobated: but there are other vices, the effects of which are ſtill more pernicious; and there are other ſituations, which lead more certainly to moral offences than the refraining from marriage. Powerful as may be the temptations to a breach of chaſtity, I am inclined to think, that they are impotent, in compariſon of the temptations ariſing from continued diſtreſs. A large claſs of women, and many men, I have no doubt, paſs a conſiderable part of their lives conſiſtently with the laws of chaſtity; but I believe there will be found very few, who paſs through the ordeal of ſqualid and hopeleſs poverty, or even of long continued em-

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barraſſed circumſtances, without a great moral degradation of character.

In the higher and middle claſſes of ſociety, it is a melancholy and diſtreſſing ſight to obſerve, not unfrequently, a man of a noble and ingenuous diſpoſition, once feelingly alive to a ſenſe of honour and integrity, gradually ſinking under the preſſure of circumſtances, making his excuſes at firſt with a bluſh of conſcious ſhame, afraid of ſeeing the faces of his friends from whom he may have borrowed money, reduced to the meaneſt tricks and ſubterfuges to delay or avoid the payment of his juſt debts; till ultimately grown familiar with falſehood, and at enmity with the world, he loſes all the grace and dignity of man.

To the general prevalence of indigence, and the extraordinary encouragements which we afford in this country to a total want of foreſight and prudence among the common people,[a] is

[a] Mr. Colquhoun, ſpeaking of the poor laws, obſerves, that "in ſpite of all the ingenious arguments which have been "uſed in favour of a ſyſtem, admitted to be wiſely conceived "in its origin, the effects it has produced inconteſtably prove, "that, with reſpect to the maſs of the poor, there is ſome-"thing radically wrong in the execution. If it were not ſo, "it

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is to be attributed a considerable part of those continual depredations on property, and other more atrocious crimes, which drive us to the painful resource of such a number of executions.[a] According to Mr. Colquhoun, above twenty thousand miserable individuals of various classes rise up every morning, without knowing how or by what means they are to be supported during the passing day, or where in many instances they are to lodge on the succeeding night.[b] It is by these unhappy persons, that the principal depredations on the public are committed: and supposing but few of them to be married, and driven to these acts, from the necessity of supporting their children; yet still it will not cease to be true, that the too great frequency of

"it is impossible, that there could exist in the metropolis such "an inconceivable portion of human misery, amidst examples "of munificence and benevolence unparallelled in any age or "country." Police of Metropolis, c. xiii. p. 359.

In the effects of the poor laws, I fully agree with Mr. Colquhoun; but I cannot agree with him in admitting, that the system was well conceived in its origin. I attribute still more evil to the original ill conception, than to the subsequent ill execution.

[a] Mr. Colquhoun observes, that "Indigence in the present "state of society may be considered as a principal cause of "the increase of crimes." Police of Metropolis, c. xiii, p. 352.

[b] Id. c. xi, p. 313.

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marriage among the pooreſt claſſes is one of the principal cauſes of the temptations to theſe crimes. A conſiderable part of theſe unhappy wretches will probably be found to be the offſpring of ſuch marriages, educated in workhouſes where every vice is propagated, or bred up at home in filth and rags, and with an utter ignorance of every moral obligation.[a] A ſtill greater part perhaps conſiſts of perſons, who, being unable for ſome time to get employment owing to the full ſupply of labour, have been urged to theſe extremities by their temporary wants; and, having thus loſt their characters, are rejected, even when their labour may be wanted, by the well-founded caution of civil ſociety.[b]

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[a] Police of Metropolis, c. xi, xii, p. 355, 370.

[b] Police of the Metropolis, c. xiii, p. 353 et ſeq. In ſo large a town as London, which muſt neceſſarily encourage a prodigious influx of ſtrangers from the country, there muſt be always a great many perſons out of work; and it is probable, that ſome public inſtitution for the relief of the caſual poor upon a plan ſimiliar to that propoſed by Mr. Colquhoun (c. xiii, p. 371.) would, under very judicious management, produce more good than evil. But for this purpoſe it would be abſolutely neceſſary, that, if work were provided by the inſtitution, the ſum that a man could earn by it ſhould be leſs than the worſt paid common labour; otherwiſe the claimants would rapidly increaſe, and the funds would ſoon be inade-

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When indigence does not produce overt acts of vice, it palsies every virtue. Under the continued temptations to a breach of chastity, occasional failures may take place, and the moral sensibility in other respects not be very strikingly impaired; but the continued temptations which

quate to their object. In the institution at Hamburgh, which appears to have been the most successful of any yet established, the nature of the work was such, that, though paid above the usual price, a person could not easily earn by it more than eighteen pence a week. It was the determined principle of the managers of the institution, to reduce the support which they gave lower than what any industrious man or woman in such circumstances could earn. (Account of the management of the poor in Hamburgh, by C. Voght, p. 18.) And it is to this principle, that they attribute their success. It should be observed however, that neither the institution at Hamburgh, nor that planned by Count Rumford in Bavaria, has subsisted long enough for us to be able to pronounce on their permanent good effects. It will not admit of a doubt, that institutions for the relief of the poor, on their first establishment, remove a great quantity of distress. The only question is, whether, as succeeding generations arise, the increasing funds necessary for their support, and the increasing numbers that become dependent, are not greater evils, than that which was to be remedied; and whether the country will not ultimately be left with as much mendicity as before, besides all the poverty and dependence accumulated in the public institutions. This seems to be nearly the case in England at present. I do not believe, that we should have more beggars if we had no poor laws.

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beſet hopeleſs poverty, and the ſtrong ſenſe of injuſtice that generally accompanies it from an ignorance of its true cauſe, tend ſo powerfully to ſour the diſpoſition, to harden the heart, and deaden the moral ſenſe, that, generally ſpeaking, virtue takes her flight clear away from the tainted ſpot, and does not often return.

Even with reſpect to the vices which relate to the ſex, marriage has been found to be by no means a complete remedy. Among the higher claſſes, our Doctors Commons, and the lives that many married men are known to lead, ſufficiently prove this; and the ſame kind of vice, though not ſo much heard of among the lower claſſes of people, owing to their indifference and want of delicacy on theſe ſubjects, is probably not very much leſs frequent.

Add to this, that ſqualid poverty, particularly when joined with idleneſs, is a ſtate the moſt unfavourable to chaſtity, that can well be conceived. The paſſion is as ſtrong, or nearly ſo, as in other ſituations; and every reſtraint on it from perſonal reſpect, or a ſenſe of morality, is generally removed. There is a degree of ſqualid poverty, in which, if a girl was brought up, I ſhould ſay, that her being really modeſt at twenty was an abſolute miracle. Thoſe perſons

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must have extraordinary minds indeed, and such as are not usually formed under similiar circumstances, who can continue to respect themselves, when no other person whatever respects them. If the children thus brought up were even to marry at twenty, it is probable, that they would have passed some years in vicious habits before that period.

If after all, however, these arguments should appear insufficient; if we reprobate the idea of endeavouring to encourage the virtue of moral restraint among the poor, from a fear of producing vice; and if we think, that to facilitate marriage by all possible means is a point of the first consequence to the morality and happiness of the people; let us act consistently, and before we proceed, endeavour to make ourselves acquainted with the mode by which alone we can effect our object.

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CHAP. V.

Of the consequences of pursuing the opposite mode.

It is an evident truth, that, whatever may be the rate of increase in the means of subsistence, the increase of population must be limited by it, at least after the food has once been divided into the smallest shares that will support life. All the children born, beyond what would be required to keep up the population to this level, must necessarily perish, unless room be made for them by the deaths of grown persons. It has appeared indeed clearly in the course of this work, that in all old states the marriages and births depend principally upon the deaths, and that there is no encouragement to early unions so powerful as a great mortality. To act consistently therefore, we should facilitate, instead of foolishly and vainly endeavouring to impede, the operations of nature in producing this mortality; and if we dread the too frequent visitation of the horrid form of famine, we should sedulously encourage the other forms of destruction, which we

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we compel nature to uſe. Inſtead of recommending cleanlineſs to the poor, we ſhould encourage contrary habits. In our towns we ſhould make the ſtreets narrower, crowd more people into the houſes, and court the return of the plague. In the country, we ſhould build our villages near ſtagnant pools, and particularly encourage ſettlements in all marſhy and unwholeſome ſituations.[a] But above all, we ſhould reprobate ſpecific remedies for ravaging diſeaſes; and thoſe benevolent, but much miſtaken men, who have thought they were doing a ſervice to mankind by projecting ſchemes for the total extirpation of particular diſorders. If by theſe and ſimilar means the annual mortality were increaſed from 1 in 36 or 40, to 1 in 18 or 20,

[a] Necker, ſpeaking of the proportion of the births in France, makes uſe of a new and inſtructive expreſſion on this ſubject, though he hardly ſeems to be ſufficiently aware of it himſelf. He ſays, "Le nombre des naiſſances eſt à celui des habitans "de un à vingt-trois et vingt-quatre dans les lieux *contrariés par* "*la nature, ou par des circonſtances morales: ce meme* rapport "dans la plus grande partie de la France, eſt de un à 25, 25½. "& 26." Adminiſt. des Finances, tom i, c. ix, p. 254. 12mo. It would appear therefore, that we had nothing more to do, than to ſettle people in marſhy ſituations, and oppreſs them by a bad government, in order to attain what politicians have hitherto conſidered as ſo deſirable—a great proportion of marriages and a greater proportion of births.

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we might probably every one of us marry at the age of puberty, and yet few be abſolutely ſtarved.

If however, we all marry at this age, and yet ſtill continue our exertions to impede the operations of nature, we may reſt aſſured, that all our efforts will be vain. Nature will not, nor cannot be defeated in her purpoſes. The neceſſary mortality muſt come, in ſome form or other; and the extirpation of one diſeaſe will only be the ſignal for the birth of another perhaps more fatal. We cannot lower the waters of miſery by preſſing them down in different places, which muſt neceſſarily make them riſe ſomewhere elſe: the only way in which we can hope to effect our purpoſe is by drawing them off. To this courſe nature is conſtantly directing our attention by the chaſtiſements, which await a contrary conduct. Theſe chaſtiſements are more or leſs ſevere, in proportion to the degree in which her admonitions produce their intended effect. In this country at preſent theſe admonitions are by no means entirely neglected. The preventive check to population prevails to a conſiderable degree, and her chaſtiſements are in conſequence moderate: but if we were all to marry at the age of puberty, they would be ſe-

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vere indeed. Political evils would probably be added to phyſical. A people goaded by conſtant diſtreſs, and viſited by frequent returns of famine, could not be kept down by a cruel deſpotiſm. We ſhould approach to the ſtate of the people in Egypt or Abyſſinia; and I would aſk, whether in that caſe it is probable, that we ſhould be more virtuous?

Phyſicians have long remarked the great changes, which take place in diſeaſes; and that, while ſome appear to yield to the efforts of human care and ſkill, others ſeem to become in proportion more malignant and fatal. Dr. William Heberden publiſhed, not long ſince, ſome valuable obſervations on this ſubject deduced from the London bills of mortality. In his preface, ſpeaking of theſe bills, he ſays, "the "gradual changes they exhibit in particular "diſeaſes correſpond to the alterations, which "in time are known to take place, in the "channels through which the great ſtream of "mortality is conſtantly flowing.[a]" In the body of his work afterwards, ſpeaking of ſome particular diſeaſes, he obſerves with that candour which always diſtinguiſhes true ſcience:

[a] Obſervations on the increaſe and Decreaſe of different Diſeaſes. Preface, p. v, 4to. 1801.

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"It is not easy to give a satisfactory reason for "all the changes, which may be observed to "take place in the history of diseases. Nor is "it any disgrace to physicians, if their causes "are often so gradual in their operation, or so "subtile, as to elude investigation."[a]

I hope I shall not be accused of presumption, in venturing to suggest, that, under certain circumstances, such changes must take place; and perhaps without any alteration in those proximate causes, which are usually looked to on these occasions. If this should appear to be true, it will not seem extraordinary, that the most skilful and scientific physicians, whose business it is principally to investigate proximate causes, should sometimes search for these causes in vain.

In a country which keeps its population at a certain standard, if the average number of marriages and births be given, it is evident, that the average number of deaths will also be given; and, to use Dr. Heberden's metaphor, the channels, through which the great stream of mortality is constantly flowing, will always convey off a given quantity. Now if we stop up any

[a] Observations on the Increase and Decrease of different Diseases, p. 43, 4to. 1801.

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of theſe channels, it is moſt perfectly clear, that the ſtream of mortality muſt run with greater force through ſome of the other channels; that is, if we eradicate ſome diſeaſes, others will become proportionally more fatal. In this caſe the only diſtinguiſhable cauſe is the damming up a neceſſary outlet of mortality.[a] Nature, in the attainment of her great purpoſes, ſeems always to ſeize upon the weakeſt part. If this part be made ſtrong by human ſkill, ſhe ſeizes upon the next weakeſt part, and ſo on in ſucceſſion; not like a capricious deity, with an intention to ſport with our ſufferings, and conſtantly to defeat our labours; but like a kind though ſometimes ſevere inſtructor, with the intention of teaching us to make all parts ſtrong, and to chace vice and miſery from the earth. In avoiding one fault we are too apt to run into ſome other; but we always find nature faithful to her great object, at every falſe ſtep we commit, ready to admoniſh us of our errors, by the infliction of ſome phyſical or moral evil. If the prevalence of the preventive check to population in a ſufficient degree were to remove many

[a] The way in which it operates is probably by increaſing poverty, in conſequence of a ſupply of labour too rapid for the demand.

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of thoſe diſeaſes, which now afflict us, yet be accompanied by a conſiderable increaſe of the vice of promiſcuous intercourſe, it is probable, that the diſorders and unhappineſs, the phyſical and moral evils ariſing from this vice, would increaſe in ſtrength and degree; and, admoniſhing us ſeverely of our error, would point to the only line of conduct approved by nature, reaſon, and religion, abſtinence from marriage till we can ſupport our children and chaſtity till that period arrives.

In the caſe juſt ſtated, in which the population and the number of marriages are ſuppoſed to be fixed, the neceſſity of a change in the mortality of ſome diſeaſes, from the diminution or extinction of others, is capable of mathematical demonſtration. The only obſcurity, which can poſſibly involve this ſubject, ariſes from taking into conſideration the effect that might be produced by a diminution of mortality in increaſing the population, or in decreaſing the number of marriages. That the removal of any of the particular cauſes of mortality can have no further effect upon population than the means of ſubſiſtence will allow, and that it has little influence on theſe means of ſubſiſtence, are facts, of which I hope the reader is already convinced.

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Of its operation in tending to prevent marriage, by diminishing the demand for fresh supplies of children, I have no doubt; and there is reason to think, that it had this effect, in no inconsiderable degree, on the extinction of the plague, which had so long and so dreadfully ravaged this country. Dr. Heberden draws a striking picture of the favourable change observed in the health of the people of England since this period; and justly attributes it to the improvements which have gradually taken place, not only in London but in all great towns; and in the manner of living throughout the kingdom, particularly with respect to cleanliness and ventilation.[a] But these causes would not have produced the effect observed, if they had not been accompanied by an increase of the preventive check; and probably the spirit of cleanliness, and better mode of living, which then began to prevail, by spreading more generally a decent and useful pride, principally contributed to this increase. The diminution in the number of marriages, however, was not sufficient to make up for the great decrease of mortality, from the extinction of the plague, and the striking reduction of the deaths in the dysentery.[b] While these and

[a] Observ. on Inc. and Dec. of Diseases, p. 35. [b] Id. p. 34.

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ſome other diſorders became almoſt evaneſcent, conſumption, palſy, apoplexy, gout, lunacy, and the ſmall-pox, became more mortal.[a] The widening of theſe drains was neceſſary to carry off the population, which ſtill remained redundant, notwithſtanding the increaſed operation of the preventive check, and the part which was annually diſpoſed of and enabled to ſubſiſt by the increaſe of agriculture.

Dr. Haygarth, in the ſketch of his benevolent plan for the extermination of the caſual ſmall-pox, draws a frightful picture of the mortality, which has been occaſioned by this diſtemper; attributes to it the ſlow progreſs of population; and makes ſome curious calculations on the favourable effects, which would be produced in this reſpect by its extermination.[b] His concluſions however, I fear, would not follow from his premiſes. I am far from doubting, that millions and millions of human beings have been deſtroyed by the ſmall-pox. But were its devaſtations, as Dr. Haygarth ſuppoſes, many thouſand degrees greater than the plague,[c] I ſhould ſtill doubt, whether the average population of the earth had been diminiſhed by them. The ſmall-pox is certainly one of the channels, and a very

[a] Obſerv. on Inc. and Dec. of Diſeaſes, p. 36 et ſeq.

[b] Vol. i, part ii, ſect. v and vi. [c] Id ſ. viii, p. 164.

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broad one, which nature has opened for the laſt thouſand years, to keep down the population to the level of the means of ſubſiſtence; but had this been cloſed, others would have become wider, or new ones would have been formed. In ancient times the mortality from war and the plague was incomparably greater than in modern. On the gradual diminution of this ſtream of mortality, the generation and almoſt univerſal prevalence of the ſmall-pox is a great and ſtriking inſtance of one of thoſe changes in the channels of mortality, which ought to awaken our attention, and animate us to patient and perſevering inveſtigation. For my own part I feel not the ſlighteſt doubt, that, if the introduction of the cow-pox ſhould extirpate the ſmall-pox, and yet the number of marriages continue the ſame, we ſhall find a very perceptible difference in the increaſed mortality of ſome other diſeaſes. Nothing could prevent this effect but a ſudden ſtart in our agriculture; and ſhould this take place, which I fear we have not much reaſon to expect, it will not be owing to the number of children ſaved from death by the cow-pox inoculation, but to the alarms occaſioned among the people of property by the late ſcarcities, and to the increaſed gains of farmers, which have been ſo abſurdly repro-

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bated. I am ſtrongly however inclined to believe, that the number of marriages will not, in this caſe, remain the ſame; but that the gradual light, which may be expected to be thrown on this intereſting topic of human inquiry, will teach us how to make the extinction of a mortal diſorder a real bleſſing to us, a real improvement in the general health and happineſs of the ſociety.

If, on contemplating the increaſe of vice which might contingently follow an attempt to inculcate the duty of moral reſtraint, and the increaſe of miſery that muſt neceſſarily follow the attempts to encourage marriage and population, we come to the concluſion, not to interfere in any reſpect, but to leave every man to his own free choice, and reſponſible only to God for the evil which he does in either way; this is all I contend for; I would on no account do more; but I contend, that at preſent we are very far from doing this.

Among the lower claſſes, where the point is of the greateſt importance, the poor laws afford a direct, conſtant, and ſyſtematical encouragement to marriage, by removing from each individual that heavy reſponſibility, which he would incur by the laws of nature, for bringing beings into the world which he could not ſupport. Our private

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private benevolence has the ſame direction as the poor laws, and almoſt invariably tends to facilitate the rearing of families, and to equalize as much as poſſible the circumſtances of married and ſingle men.

Among the higher claſſes of people, the ſuperior diſtinctions which married women receive, and the marked inattentions to which ſingle women of advanced age are expoſed, enable many men, who are agreeable neither in mind nor perſon, and are beſides in the wane of life, to chooſe a partner among the young and fair, inſtead of being confined, as nature ſeems to dictate, to perſons of nearly their own age and accompliſhments. It is ſcarcely to be doubted, that the fear of being an old maid, and of that ſilly and unjuſt ridicule, which folly ſometimes attaches to this name, drives many women into the marriage union with men whom they diſlike, or at beſt to whom they are perfectly indifferent. Such marriages muſt to every delicate mind appear little better than legal proſtitutions; and they often burden the earth with unneceſſary children, without compenſating for it by an acceſſion of happineſs and virtue to the parties themſelves.

Throughout all the ranks of ſociety, the pre-

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vailing opinions reſpecting the duty and obligation of marriage cannot but have a very powerful influence. The man who thinks, that, in going out of the world without leaving repreſentatives behind him, he ſhall have failed in an important duty to ſociety, will be diſpoſed to force rather than to repreſs his inclinations on this ſubject; and when his reaſon repreſents to him the difficulties attending a family, he will endeavour not to attend to theſe ſuggeſtions, will ſtill determine to venture, and will hope, that in the diſcharge of what he conceives to be his duty he ſhall not be deſerted by Providence.

In a civilized country, ſuch as England, where a taſte for the decencies and comforts of life prevails among a very large claſs of people, it is not poſſible, that the encouragements to marriage from poſitive inſtitutions and prevailing opinions ſhould entirely obſcure the light of nature and reaſon on this ſubject; but ſtill they contribute to make it comparatively weak and indiſtinct. And till this obſcurity is entirely removed, and the poor are undeceived with reſpect to the principal cauſe of their paſt poverty, and taught to know,

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know, that their future happineſs or miſery muſt depend chiefly upon themſelves, it cannot be ſaid, that, with regard to the great queſtion of marriage, we leave every man to his own free and fair choice.

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CHAP. VI.

Effects of the knowledge of the principal cause of poverty on Civil Liberty.

It may appear, perhaps, that a doctrine, which attributes the greatest part of the sufferings of the lower classes of society exclusively to themselves, is unfavourable to the cause of liberty, as affording a tempting opportunity to governments of oppressing their subjects at pleasure, and laying the whole blame on the laws of nature and the imprudence of the poor. We are not however to trust to first appearances; and I am strongly disposed to believe, that those who will be at the pains to consider this subject deeply will be convinced, that nothing would so powerfully contribute to the advancement of rational freedom, as a thorough knowledge generally circulated of the principal cause of poverty; and that the ignorance of this cause, and the natural consequences of this ignorance, form at present one of the chief obstacles to its progress.

The pressure of distress on the lower classes

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of people, with the habit of attributing this diſtreſs to their rulers, appears to me to be the rock of defence, the caſtle, the guardian ſpirit of deſpotiſm. It affords to the tyrant the fatal and unanſwerable plea of neceſſity. It is the reaſon, that every free government tends conſtantly to its deſtruction; and that its appointed guardians become daily leſs jealous of the encroachments of power. It is the reaſon, that ſo many noble efforts in the cauſe of freedom have failed; and that almoſt every revolution, after long and painful ſacrifices, has terminated in a military deſpotiſm. While any diſſatisfied man of talents has power to perſuade the lower claſſes of people, that all their poverty and diſtreſs ariſe ſolely from the iniquity of the government, though perhaps the greateſt part of what they ſuffer is unconnected with this cauſe, it is evident, that the ſeeds of freſh diſcontents and freſh revolutions are continually ſowing. When an eſtabliſhed government has been deſtroyed, finding that their poverty is not removed, their reſentment naturally falls upon the ſucceſſors to power; and when theſe have been immolated without producing the deſired effect, other ſacrifices are called for, and ſo on without end. Are we to be ſurpriſed, that, under ſuch circumſtances,

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ſtances, the majority of well-diſpoſed people, finding that a government with proper reſtrictions was unable to ſupport itſelf againſt the revolutionary ſpirit, and weary and exhauſted with perpetual change to which they could ſee no end, ſhould give up the ſtruggle in deſpair, and throw themſelves into the arms of the firſt power, which could afford them protection againſt the horrors of anarchy?

A mob, which is generally the growth of a redundant population goaded by reſentment for real ſufferings, but totally ignorant of the quarter from which they originate, is of all monſters the moſt fatal to freedom. It ſoſters a prevailing tyranny, and engenders one where it was not: and though, in its dreadful fits of reſentment, it appears occaſionally to devour its unſightly offspring; yet no ſooner is the horrid deed committed, than, however unwilling it may be to propagate ſuch a breed, it immediately groans with a new birth.

Of the tendency of mobs to produce tyranny we may not be long without an example in this country. As a friend to freedom, and naturally an enemy to large ſtanding armies, it is with extreme reluctance that I am compelled to acknowledge, that had it not been for the great

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organized force in the country, the diſtreſſes of the people during the late ſcarcities, encouraged by the extreme ignorance and folly of many among the higher claſſes, might have driven them to commit the moſt dreadful outrages, and ultimately to involve the country in all the horrors of famine. Should ſuch periods often recur, a recurrence which we have too much reaſon to apprehend from the preſent ſtate of the country, the proſpect which opens to our view is melancholy in the extreme. The Engliſh conſtitution will be ſeen haſtening with rapid ſtrides to the *Euthanaſia* foretold by Hume, unleſs its progreſs be interrupted by ſome popular commotion; and this alternative preſents a picture ſtill more appalling to the imagination. If political diſcontents were blended with the cries of hunger, and a revolution were to take place by the inſtrumentality of a mob clamouring for want of food, the conſequences would be unceaſing change and unceaſing carnage, the bloody career of which nothing but the eſtabliſhment of ſome complete deſpotiſm could arreſt.

We can ſcarcely believe, that the appointed guardians of Britiſh liberty ſhould quietly have acquieſced in thoſe gradual encroachments of power,

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power, which have taken place of late years, but from the apprehenſion of theſe ſtill more dreadful evils. Great as has been the influence of corruption, I cannot yet think ſo meanly of the country gentlemen of England as to believe, that they would thus have given up a part of their birthright of liberty, if they had not been actuated by a real and genuine fear, that it was then in greater danger from the people than from the crown. They appeared to ſurrender themſelves to government on condition of being protected from the mob; but they never would have made this melancholy and diſheartening ſurrender, if ſuch a mob had not exiſted either in reality or in imagination. That the fears on this ſubject were artfully exaggerated, and increaſed beyond the limits of juſt apprehenſion, is undeniable; but I think it is alſo undeniable, that the frequent declamation which was heard againſt the unjuſt inſtitutions of ſociety, and the deluſive arguments on equality which were circulated among the lower claſſes, gave us juſt reaſon to ſuppoſe, that, if the *vox populi* had been allowed to ſpeak, it would have appeared to be the voice of error and abſurdity, inſtead of the *vox Dei*.

To ſay that our conduct is not to be regulated by

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by circumſtances, is to betray an ignorance of the moſt ſolid and incontrovertible principles of morality. Though the admiſſion of this principle may ſometimes afford a cloak to changes of opinion, that do not reſult from the pureſt motives; yet the admiſſion of a contrary principle would be productive of infinitely worſe conſequences. The phraſe of exiſting circumſtances has, I believe, not unfrequently created a ſmile in the Engliſh Houſe of Commons; but the ſmile ſhould have been reſerved for the application of the phraſe, and not have been excited by the phraſe itſelf. A very frequent repetition of it has indeed, of itſelf, rather a ſuſpicious air; and its application ſhould always be watched with the moſt jealous and anxious attention; but no man ought to be judged *in limine* for ſaying, that exiſting circumſtances had obliged him to alter his opinions and conduct. The country gentlemen were perhaps too eaſily convinced, that exiſting circumſtances called upon them to give up ſome of the moſt valuable privileges of Engliſhmen; but as far as they were really convinced of this obligation, they acted conſiſtently with the cleareſt rule of morality.

The degree of power to be given to the civil government,

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government, and the meaſure of our ſubmiſſion to it, muſt be determined by general expediency; and in judging of this expediency every circumſtance is to be taken into conſideration; particularly the ſtate of public opinion, and the degree of ignorance and deluſion prevailing among the common people. The patriot who might be called upon by the love of his country to join with heart and hand in a riſing of the people for ſome ſpecific attainable object of reform, if he knew that they were enlightened reſpecting their own ſituation, and would ſtop ſhort when they had attained their demand, would be called upon by the ſame motive to ſubmit to very great oppreſſion rather than give the ſlighteſt countenance to a popular tumult, the members of which, at leaſt the greater number of them, were perſuaded that the deſtruction of the Parliament, the Lord Mayor, and the monopolizers, would make bread cheap, and that a revolution would enable them all to ſupport their families. In this caſe it is more the ignorance and deluſion of the lower claſſes of people, that occaſions the oppreſſion, than the actual diſpoſition of the government to tyranny.

That there is however in all power a conſtant

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ſtant tendency to encroach is an incontrovertible truth, and cannot be too ſtrongly inculcated. The checks which are neceſſary to ſecure the liberty of the ſubject will always in ſome degree embarraſs and delay the operations of the executive government. The members of this government feeling theſe inconveniencies, while they are exerting themſelves, as they conceive, in the ſervice of their country, and conſcious perhaps of no ill intention towards the people, will naturally be diſpoſed, on every occaſion, to demand the ſuſpenſion or abolition of theſe checks; but if once the convenience of miniſters be put into competition with the liberties of the people, and we get into a habit of relying on fair aſſurances and perſonal character, inſtead of examining, with the moſt ſcrupulous and jealous care, the merits of each particular caſe, there is an end of Britiſh freedom. If we once admit the principle, that the government muſt know better with regard to the quantity of power which it wants, than we can poſſibly do with our limited means of information, and that therefore it is our duty to ſurrender up our private judgments, we may juſt as well at the ſame time ſurrender up the whole of our conſtitution. Government is a quarter in which li-

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berty is not nor cannot be very faithfully preſerved. If we are wanting to ourſelves, and inattentive to our great intereſts in this reſpect, it is the height of folly and unreaſonableneſs to expect, that government will attend to them for us. Should the Britiſh conſtitution ultimately lapſe into a deſpotiſm, as has been propheſied, I ſhall think, that the country gentlemen of England will have really much more to anſwer for than the miniſters.

To do the country gentlemen juſtice, however, I ſhould readily acknowledge, that in the partial deſertion of their poſts as guardians of Britiſh freedom, which has already taken place, they have been actuated more by fear than corruption. And the principal reaſon of this fear was, I conceive, the ignorance and deluſions of the common people, and the proſpective horrors which were contemplated, if in ſuch a ſtate of mind they ſhould by any revolutionary movement obtain an aſcendant.

The circulation of Paine's Rights of Man, it is ſuppoſed, has done great miſchief among the lower and middling claſſes of people in this country. This is probably true; but not becauſe man is without rights, or that theſe rights ought not to be known; but becauſe Mr. Paine has

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has fallen into ſome fundamental errors reſpecting the principles of government, and in many important points has ſhown himſelf totally unacquainted with the ſtructure of ſociety, and the different moral effects to be expected from the phyſical difference between this country and America. Mobs of the ſame deſcription as thoſe collections of people known by this name in Europe could not exiſt in America. The number of people without property is there, from the phyſical ſtate of the country, comparatively ſmall; and therefore the civil power, which is to protect property, cannot require the ſame degree of ſtrength. Mr. Paine very juſtly obſerves, that whatever the apparent cauſe of any riots may be, the real one is always want of happineſs; but when he goes on to ſay, it ſhows that ſomething is wrong in the ſyſtem of government, that injures the felicity by which ſociety is to be preſerved, he falls into the common error of attributing all want of happineſs to government. It is evident, that this want of happineſs might have exiſted, and from ignorance might have been the principal cauſe of the riots, and yet be almoſt wholly unconnected with any of the proceedings of government. The redundant population of an old ſtate furniſhes

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niſhes materials of unhappineſs, unknown to ſuch a ſtate as that of America; and if an attempt were to be made to remedy this unhappineſs, by diſtributing the produce of the taxes to the poorer claſſes of ſociety, according to the plan propoſed by Mr. Paine, the evil would be aggravated a hundred fold, and in a very ſhort time no ſum that the ſociety could poſſibly raiſe would be adequate to the propoſed object.

Nothing would ſo effectually counteract the miſchiefs occaſioned by Mr. Paine's Rights of Man, as a general knowledge of the real rights of man. What theſe rights are it is not my buſineſs at preſent to explain; but there is one right which man has generally been thought to poſſeſs, which I am confident he neither does nor can poſſeſs, a right to ſubſiſtence when his labour will not fairly purchaſe it. Our laws indeed ſay, that he has this right, and bind the ſociety to furniſh employment and food to thoſe, who cannot get them in the regular market; but in ſo doing they attempt to reverſe the laws of nature; and it is in conſequence to be expected, not only that they ſhould fail in their object, but that the poor, who were intended to be benefitted, ſhould ſuffer moſt cruelly from this

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this inhuman deceit which is practiſed upon them.

The Abbé Raynal has ſaid, that "Avant "toutes les loix ſociales l'homme avoit le droit "de ſubſiſter."* He might with juſt as much propriety have ſaid, that before the inſtitution of ſocial laws, every man had a right to live a hundred years. Undoubtedly he had then, and has ſtill, a good right to live a hundred years, nay a thouſand, *if he can*, without interfering with the right of others to live; but the affair in both caſes is principally an affair of power, not of right. Social laws very greatly increaſe this power, by enabling a much greater number to ſubſiſt than could ſubſiſt without them, and ſo far very greatly enlarge *le droit de ſubſiſter*; but neither before nor after the inſtitution of ſocial laws could an unlimited number ſubſiſt; and before, as well as ſince, he who ceaſed to have the power ceaſed to have the right.

If the great truths on theſe ſubjects were more generally circulated, and the lower claſſes of people could be convinced, that by the laws of nature, independently of any particular inſtitutions, except the great one of property, which is abſolutely neceſſary in order to attain any conſiderable produce, no perſon has any

* Raynal, Hiſt. des Indes, vol. x, ſ. x, p. 322, 8vo.

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claim of *right* on ſociety for ſubſiſtence, if his labour will not purchaſe it, the greateſt part of the miſchievous declamation on the unjuſt inſtitutions of ſociety would fall powerleſs to the ground. The poor are by no means inclined to be viſionary. Their diſtreſſes are always real, though they are not attributed to the real cauſes. If theſe real cauſes were properly explained to them, and they were taught to know how ſmall a part of their preſent diſtreſs was attributable to government, and how great a part to cauſes totally unconnected with it, diſcontent and irritation among the lower claſſes of people would ſhow themſelves much leſs frequently than at preſent; and when they did ſhow themſelves, would be much leſs to be dreaded. The efforts of turbulent and diſcontented men in the middle claſſes of ſociety might ſafely be diſregarded, if the poor were ſo far enlightened reſpecting the real nature of their ſituation, as to be aware that by aiding them in their ſchemes of renovation, they would probably be promoting the ambitious views of others, without in any reſpect benefitting themſelves. And the country gentlemen, and men of property in England, might ſecurely return to a wholeſome jealouſy of the encroachments of power; and inſtead

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inſtead of daily ſacrificing the liberties of the ſubject on the altar of public ſafety, might, without any juſt apprehenſion from the people, not only tread back all their late ſteps, but firmly inſiſt upon thoſe gradual reforms, which the lapſe of time and the ſtorms of the political world have rendered neceſſary, to prevent the gradual deſtruction of the Britiſh conſtitution.

All improvements in governments muſt neceſſarily originate with perſons of ſome education, and theſe will of courſe be found among the people of property. Whatever may be ſaid of a few, it is impoſſible to ſuppoſe, that the great maſs of the people of property ſhould be really intereſted in the abuſes of government. They merely ſubmit to them from the fear, that an endeavour to remove them might be productive of greater evils. Could we but take away this fear, reform and improvement would proceed with as much facility as the removal of nuiſances, or the paving and lighting of the ſtreets. In human life we are continually called upon to ſubmit to a leſſer evil in order to avoid a greater; and it is the part of a wiſe man, to do this readily and cheerfully; but no wiſe man will ſubmit to any evil, if he can get rid of it without danger. Remove all apprehenſion from the tyranny or folly of

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the people, and the tyranny of government could not ſtand a moment. It would then appear in its proper deformity, without palliation, without pretext, without protector. Naturally feeble in itſelf, when it was once ſtripped naked, and deprived of the ſupport of public opinion and of the great plea of neceſſity, it would fall without a ſtruggle. Its few intereſted defenders would hide their heads abaſhed, and would be aſhamed any longer to advocate a cauſe, for which no human ingenuity could invent a plauſible argument.

The moſt ſucceſsful ſupporters of tyranny are without doubt thoſe general declaimers, who attribute the diſtreſſes of the poor, and almoſt all the evils to which ſociety is ſubject, to human inſtitutions and the iniquity of governments. The falſity of theſe accuſations, and the dreadful conſequences that would reſult from their being generally admitted and acted upon, make it abſolutely neceſſary, that they ſhould at all events be reſiſted; not only on account of the immediate revolutionary horrors to be expected from a movement of the people acting under ſuch impreſſions, a conſideration which muſt at all times have very great weight, but on account of the extreme probability, that ſuch

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ſuch a revolution would terminate in a much worſe deſpotiſm, than that which it had deſtroyed. On theſe grounds a genuine friend of freedom, a zealous advocate for the real rights of man, might be found among the defenders of a conſiderable degree of tyranny. A cauſe bad in itſelf might be ſupported by the good and the virtuous, merely becauſe that which was oppoſed to it was much worſe; and at the moment, it was abſolutely neceſſary to make a choice between the two. Whatever therefore may be the intention of thoſe indiſcriminate accuſations againſt governments, their real effect undoubtedly is, to add a weight of talents and principles to the prevailing power, which it never would have received otherwiſe.

It is a truth, which I truſt has been ſufficiently proved in the courſe of this work, that under a government conſtructed upon the beſt and pureſt principles, and executed by men of the higheſt talents and integrity, the moſt ſqualid poverty and wretchedneſs might univerſally prevail from an inattention to the prudential check to population. And as this cauſe of unhappineſs has hitherto been ſo little underſtood, that the efforts of ſociety have always tended rather to aggravate than to leſſen it, we have

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the ſtrongeſt reaſons for ſuppoſing, that, in all the governments with which we are acquainted, a great part of the miſery to be obſerved among the lower claſſes of the people ariſes from this cauſe.

The inference therefore, which Mr. Paine and others have drawn againſt governments from the unhappineſs of the people, is palpably unfair; and before we give a ſanction to ſuch accuſations, it is a debt we owe to truth and juſtice, to aſcertain how much of this unhappineſs ariſes from the principle of population, and how much is fairly to be attributed to government. When this diſtinction has been properly made, and all the vague, indefinite, and falſe accuſations removed, government would remain, as it ought to be, clearly reſponſible for the reſt; and the amount of this would ſtill be ſuch as to make the reſponſibility very conſiderable. Though government has but little power in the direct and immediate relief of poverty, yet its indirect influence on the proſperity of its ſubjects is ſtriking and inconteſtible. And the reaſon is, that, though it is comparatively impotent in its efforts to make the food of a country keep pace with an unreſtricted increaſe of population, yet its influence is great in giving the beſt direction to thoſe checks, which in ſome form or other

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other muſt neceſſarily take place. It has clearly appeared in the former part of this work, that the moſt deſpotic and worſt governed countries, however low they might be in actual population, were uniformly the moſt populous in proportion to their means of ſubſiſtence, and the neceſſary effect of this ſtate of things muſt of courſe be very low wages. In ſuch countries the checks to population ariſe more from the ſickneſs and mortality conſequent on poverty, than from the prudence and foreſight which reſtrain the frequency and univerſality of early marriages. The checks are more of the poſitive and leſs of the preventive kind.

The firſt grand requiſite to the growth of prudential habits is the perfect ſecurity of property; and the next perhaps is that reſpectability and importance, which are given to the lower claſſes by equal laws, and the poſſeſſion of ſome influence in the framing of them. The more excellent therefore is the government, the more does it tend to generate that prudence and elevation of ſentiment, by which alone in the preſent ſtate of our being can poverty be avoided.

It has been ſometimes aſſerted, that the only reaſon why it is advantageous, that the people ſhould have ſome ſhare in the government, is that

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that a repreſentation of the people tends beſt to ſecure the framing of good and equal laws; but that, if the ſame object could be attained under a deſpotiſm, the ſame advantage would accrue to the community. If however the repreſentative ſyſtem, by ſecuring to the lower claſſes of ſociety a more equal and liberal mode of treatment from their ſuperiors, gives to each individual a greater perſonal reſpectability, and a greater fear of perſonal degradation; it is evident, that it will powerfully cooperate with the ſecurity of property in animating the exertions of induſtry, and in generating habits of prudence; and thus more powerfully tend to increaſe the riches and proſperity of the lower claſſes of the community, than if the ſame laws had exiſted under a deſpotiſm.

But though the tendency of a free conſtitution and a good government to diminiſh poverty be certain; yet their effect in this way muſt neceſſarily be indirect and ſlow, and very different from the direct and immediate relief, which the lower claſſes of people are too frequently in the habit of looking forward to as the conſequence of a revolution. This habit of expecting too much, and the irritation occaſioned by diſappointment, continually give a wrong

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wrong direction to their efforts in favour of liberty, and conſtantly tend to defeat the accompliſhment of thoſe gradual reforms in government, and that ſlow melioration of the condition of the lower claſſes of ſociety, which are really attainable.

It is of the very higheſt importance therefore, to know diſtinctly what government cannot do, as well as what it can do. If I were called upon to name the cauſe, which, in my conception, had more than any other contributed to the very ſlow progreſs of freedom, ſo diſheartening to every liberal mind, I ſhould ſay, that it was the confuſion that had exiſted reſpecting the cauſes of the unhappineſs and diſcontents which prevail in ſociety; and the advantage which governments had been able to take, and indeed had been compelled to take, of this confuſion, to confirm and ſtrengthen their power. I cannot help thinking therefore, that a knowledge generally circulated, that the principal cauſe of want and unhappineſs is only indirectly connected with government, and totally beyond its power directly to remove; and that it depends upon the conduct of the poor themſelves; would, inſtead of giving any advantage to governments,

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vernments, give a great additional weight to the popular ſide of the queſtion, by removing the dangers with which from ignorance it is at preſent accompanied; and thus tend, in a very powerful manner, to promote the cauſe of rational freedom.

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CHAP. VII.

Plan of the gradual abolition of the Poor Laws propoſed.

If the principles in the preceding chapters ſhould ſtand the teſt of examination, and we ſhould ever feel the obligation of endeavouring to act upon them, the next inquiry would be, in what way we ought practically to proceed. The firſt grand obſtacle, which preſents itſelf in this country, is the ſyſtem of the poor laws, which has been juſtly ſtated to be an evil, in compariſon of which the national debt, with all its magnitude of terror, is of little moment.[a] The rapidity with which the poors rates have increaſed of late years preſents us indeed with the proſpect of ſuch an extraordinary proportion of paupers in the ſociety, as would ſeem to be incredible in a nation flouriſhing in arts, agriculture, and commerce, and with a government which has generally been allowed to be the

[a] Reports of the Society for bettering the condition of the poor, vol. iii, p. 21.

beſt,

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beſt, that has hitherto ſtood the teſt of experience.[a]

Greatly as we may be ſhocked at ſuch a proſpect, and ardently as we may wiſh to remove it, the evil is now ſo deeply ſeated, and the relief given by the poor laws ſo widely extended, that no man of humanity could venture to propoſe their immediate abolition. To mitigate their effects however, and ſtop their future increaſe, to which, if left to continue upon their preſent plan, we can ſee no probable termination, it has been propoſed to fix the whole ſum to be raiſed, at its preſent rate, or any other that might be determined upon; and to make a law, that on no account this ſum ſhould be exceeded. The objection to this plan is, that a very large ſum would be ſtill to be raiſed, and a great number of people to be ſupported; the conſequence of which would be, that the poor would not be eaſily able to diſtinguiſh the alteration that had been made. Each individual

[a] It has been ſaid, that during the late ſcarcities half of the population of the country received relief. If the poors rates continue increaſing as rapidly as they have done on the average of the laſt ten years, how melancholy are our future proſpects! The ſyſtem of the poor laws has been juſtly ſtated by the French to be *la plaie politique de l' Angleterre la plus devorante.* (Comitè de Mendicitè.)

would

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would think, that he had as good a right to be supported when he was in want as any other person; and those who unfortunately chanced to be in distress, when the fixed sum had been collected, would think themselves particularly ill used on being excluded from all assistance, while so many others were enjoying this advantage. If the sum collected were divided among all that were in want, however their numbers might increase, though such a plan would not be so unfair with regard to those who became dependent after the sum had been fixed, it would undoubtedly be very hard upon those who had been in the habit of receiving a more liberal supply, and had done nothing to justify its being taken from them; and in both cases, it would be certainly unjust in the society to undertake the support of the poor, and yet, if their numbers increased, to feed them so sparingly, that they must necessarily die of hunger and disease.

I have reflected much on the subject of the poor laws, and hope therefore that I shall be excused in venturing to suggest a mode of their gradual abolition, to which I confess that at present I can see no material objection. Of this indeed I feel nearly convinced, that, should we ever become sufficiently sensible of the wide-

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ſpreading tyranny, dependence, indolence, and unhappineſs, which they create, as ſeriouſly to make an effort to aboliſh them, we ſhall be compelled by a ſenſe of juſtice to adopt the principle, if not the plan, which I ſhall mention. It ſeems impoſſible to get rid of ſo extenſive a ſyſtem of ſupport, conſiſtently with humanity, without applying ourſelves directly to its vital principle, and endeavouring to counteract that deeply-ſeated cauſe, which occaſions the rapid growth of all ſuch eſtabliſhments, and invariably renders them inadequate to their object. As a previous ſtep even to any conſiderable alteration in the preſent ſyſtem, which would contract, or ſtop the increaſe of the relief to be given, it appears to me, that we are bound in juſtice and honour formally to diſclaim the *right* of the poor to ſupport.

To this end, I ſhould propoſe a regulation to be made, declaring, that no child born from any marriage, taking place after the expiration of a year from the date of the law; and no illegitimate child born two years from the ſame date, ſhould ever be entitled to pariſh aſſiſtance. And to give a more general knowledge of this law, and to enforce it more ſtrongly on the minds of the lower claſſes of people, the clergyman of each

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each pariſh ſhould, after the publication of banns, read a ſhort addreſs, ſtating the ſtrong obligation on every man to ſupport his own children; the impropriety, and even immorality, of marrying without a proſpect of being able to do this; the evils which had reſulted to the poor themſelves, from the attempt which had been made to aſſiſt by public inſtitutions in a duty which ought to be excluſively appropriated to parents; and the abſolute neceſſity which had at length appeared of abandoning all ſuch inſtitutions, on account of their producing effects totally oppoſite to thoſe which were intended.

This would operate as a fair, diſtinct, and preciſe notice, which no man could well miſtake; and without preſſing hard on any particular individuals, would at once throw off the riſing generation from that miſerable and helpleſs dependence upon the government and the rich, the moral as well as phyſical conſequences of which are almoſt incalculable.

After the public notice which I have propoſed had been given, and the ſyſtem of poor laws had ceaſed with regard to the riſing generation, if any man choſe to marry, without a proſpect of being able to ſupport a family, he ſhould have the moſt perfect liberty ſo to do. Though to

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marry in this caſe, is in my opinion clearly an immoral act, yet it is not one which ſociety can juſtly take upon itſelf to prevent or puniſh; becauſe the puniſhment provided for it by the laws of nature, falls directly and moſt ſeverely upon the individual who commits the act, and through him, only more remotely and feebly, on the ſociety. When nature will govern and puniſh for us, it is a very miſerable ambition to wiſh to ſnatch the rod from her hands, and draw upon ourſelves the odium of executioner. To the puniſhment therefore of nature he ſhould be left, the puniſhment of want. He has erred in the face of a moſt clear and preciſe warning, and can have no juſt reaſon to complain of any perſon but himſelf, when he feels the conſequences of his error. All pariſh aſſiſtance ſhould be denied him: and if the hand of private charity be ſtretched forth in his relief, the intereſts of humanity imperiouſly require, that it ſhould be adminiſtered ſparingly. He ſhould be taught to know, that the laws of nature, which are the laws of God, had doomed him and his family to ſuffer for diſobeying their repeated admonitions; that he had no claim of *right* on ſociety for the ſmalleſt portion of food, beyond that which his labour would fairly purchaſe;

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chaſe; and that if he and his family were ſaved from ſuffering the extremities of hunger, he would owe it to the pity of ſome kind benefactor, to whom, therefore, he ought to be bound by the ſtrongeſt ties of gratitude.

If this ſyſtem were purſued, we need be under no apprehenſions, that the number of perſons in extreme want would be beyond the power and the will of the benevolent to ſupply. The ſphere for the exerciſe of private charity would, I am confident, be leſs than it is at preſent; and the only difficulty would be, to reſtrain the hand of benevolence from aſſiſting thoſe in diſtreſs in ſo indiſcriminate a manner as to encourage indolence and want of foreſight in others.

With regard to illegitimate children, after the proper notice had been given, they ſhould not be allowed to have any claim to pariſh aſſiſtance, but be left entirely to the ſupport of private charity. If the parents deſert their child they ought to be made anſwerable for the crime. The infant is, comparatively ſpeaking, of little value to the ſociety, as others will immediately ſupply its place. Its principal value is on account of its being the object of one of the moſt delightful paſſions in human nature—

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parental affection. But if this value be diſregarded by thoſe who are alone in a capacity to feel it, the ſociety cannot be called upon to put itſelf in their place; and has no further buſineſs in its protection, than to puniſh the crime of deſertion or intentional ill-treatment in the perſons whoſe duty it is to provide for it.

At preſent the child is taken under the protection of the pariſh,[a] and generally dies, at leaſt in London, within the firſt year. The loſs to the ſociety is the ſame; but the crime is diluted by the number of people concerned, and the death paſſes as a viſitation of Providence, inſtead of being conſidered as the neceſſary conſequence of the conduct of its parents, for which they ought to be held reſponſible to God and to ſociety.

The deſertion of both parents, however, is not ſo common as the deſertion of one. When a ſervant or labouring man has an illegitimate child, his running away is perfectly a matter of courſe; and it is by no means uncommon for a

[a] I fully agree with Sir F. M. Eden, in thinking, that the conſtant public ſupport which deſerted children receive is the cauſe of their very great numbers in the two moſt opulent countries of Europe, France and England. State of the Poor, vol. i, p. 339.

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man with a wife and large family to withdraw into a diſtant county, and leave them to the pariſh; indeed I once heard a hard-working good ſort of man propoſe to do this, as the beſt mode of providing for a wife and ſix children.[a] If the ſimple fact of theſe frequent deſertions were related in ſome countries, a ſtrange inference would be drawn againſt the Engliſh character; but the wonder would ceaſe when our public inſtitutions were explained.

By the laws of nature, a child is confided directly and excluſively to the protection of its parents. By the laws of nature, the mother of of a child is confided almoſt as ſtrongly and excluſively to the man who is the father of it. If theſe ties were ſuffered to remain in the ſtate in which nature has left them, and the man were convinced that the woman and the child depended ſolely upon him for ſupport, I ſcarcely believe, that there are ten men breathing ſo atrocious as to deſert them. But our laws, in oppoſition to the laws of nature, ſay,

[a] "That many of the poorer claſſes of the community "avail themſelves of the liberality of the law, and leave their "wives and children on the pariſh, the reader will find "abundant proof in the ſubſequent part of this work." Sir F. M. Eden on the State of the Poor, vol. i, p. 339.

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that if the parents forſake their child, other perſons will undertake to ſupport it; or if the man forſake the woman ſhe ſhall ſtill meet with protection elſewhere; that is, we take all poſſible pains to weaken and render null the ties of nature, and then ſay that men are unnatural. But the fact is, that the ſociety itſelf, in its body politic, is the unnatural character, for framing laws that thus counteract the laws of nature, and give premiums to the violation of the beſt and moſt honourable feelings of the human heart.

It is a common thing in moſt pariſhes, when the father of an illegitimate child can be ſeized, to endeavour to frighten him into marriage by the terrors of a jail; but ſuch a proceeding cannot ſurely be too ſtrongly reprobated. In the firſt place, it is a moſt ſhallow policy in the pariſh officers; for if they ſucceed, the effect upon the preſent ſyſtem will generally be, the having three or four children to provide for, inſtead of one. And in the next place, it is difficult to conceive a more groſs and ſcandalous profanation of a religious ceremony. Thoſe who believe, that the character of a woman is ſalved by ſuch a forced engagement, or that the moral worth of the man is enhanced by affirming

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ing a lie before God, have, I confeſs, very different ideas of delicacy and morality, from thoſe which I have been taught to conſider as juſt. If a man deceive a woman into a connexion with him under a promiſe of marriage, he has undoubtedly been guilty of a moſt atrocious act, and there are few crimes which merit a more ſevere puniſhment; but the laſt that I ſhould chooſe is that which will oblige him to affirm another falſehood, which will probably render the woman that he is to be joined to miſerable, and will burden the ſociety with a family of paupers.

The obligation on every man to ſupport his children, whether legitimate or illegitimate, is ſo clear and ſtrong, that it would be juſt to arm ſociety with any power to enforce it, which would be likely to anſwer the purpoſe. But I am inclined to believe, that no exerciſe of the civil power, however rigorous, would be half ſo effectual, as a knowledge generally circulated, that children were in future to depend ſolely for ſupport upon their parents, and would be left only to caſual charity if they were deſerted.

It may appear to be hard, that a mother and her children, who had been guilty of no particular crime themſelves, ſhould ſuffer for the ill

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conduct of the father; but this is one of the invariable laws of nature; and knowing this, we ſhould think twice upon the ſubject, and be very ſure of the ground on which we go, before we preſume *ſyſtematically* to counteract it.

I have often heard the goodneſs of the Deity impeached on account of that part of the decalogue in which he declares, that he will viſit the ſins of the father upon the children; but the objection has not perhaps been ſufficiently conſidered. Without a moſt complete and fundamental change in the whole conſtitution of human nature; without making man an angel, or at leaſt ſomething totally different from what he is at preſent; it ſeems abſolutely neceſſary, that ſuch a law ſhould prevail. Would it not require a perpetual miracle, which is, perhaps, a contradiction in terms, to prevent children from being affected in their moral and civil condition by the conduct of their parents? What man is there, that has been brought up by his parents, who is not at the preſent moment enjoying ſomething from their virtues, or ſuffering ſomething from their vices; who, in his moral character, has not been elevated in ſome degree, by their prudence, their juſtice, their benevolence, their temperance, or depreſſed by

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by the contraries; who in his civil condition, has not been raised, by their reputation, their foresight, their industry, their good fortune, or lowered by their want of character, their imprudence, their indolence, and their adversity? And how much does a knowledge of this transmission of blessings contribute to excite and invigorate virtuous exertion? Proceeding upon this certainty, how ardent and incessant are the efforts of parents to give their children a good education, and to provide for their future situation in the world. If a man could neglect or desert his wife and children without their suffering any injury, how many individuals there are, who, not being very fond of their wives, or being tired of the shackles of matrimony, would withdraw from household cares and difficulties, and resume their liberty and independence as single men! But the consideration, that children may suffer for the faults of their parents, has a strong hold even upon vice; and many who are in such a state of mind, as to disregard the consequences of their habitual course of life, as far as relates to themselves, are yet greatly anxious, that their children should not suffer from their vices and follies. In the moral government of the world, it seems evidently necessary, that the sins of the fathers should be visited

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viſited upon the children; and if in our overweening vanity we imagine, that we can govern a private ſociety better by endeavouring *ſyſtematically* to counteract this law, I am inclined to believe, that we ſhall find ourſelves very greatly miſtaken.

If the plan which I have propoſed were adopted, the poors rates in a few years would begin very rapidly to decreaſe, and in no great length of time would be completely extinguiſhed; and yet, as far as it appears to me at preſent, no individual would be either deceived or injured, and conſequently no perſon could have a juſt right to complain.

The abolition of the poor laws however is not of itſelf ſufficient; and the obvious anſwer to thoſe who lay too much ſtreſs upon this ſyſtem is, to deſire them to look at the ſtate of the poor in ſome other countries, where ſuch laws do not prevail, and to compare it with their condition in England. But this compariſon, it muſt be acknowledged, is in many reſpects unfair; and would by no means decide the queſtion of the utility or inutility of ſuch a ſyſtem. England poſſeſſes very great natural and political advantages, in which perhaps the countries, that we ſhould in this caſe compare with

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with her, would be found to be palpably deficient. The nature of her ſoil and climate is ſuch, that thoſe almoſt univerſal failures in the crops of grain, which are known in ſome countries, never occur in England. Her inſular ſituation and extended commerce are peculiarly favourable for importation. Her numerous manufactures employ nearly all the hands that are not engaged in agriculture, and afford the means of a regular diſtribution of the annual produce of the land and labour to the whole of her inhabitants. But, above all, throughout a very large claſs of the people, a decided taſte for the conveniencies and comforts of life, a ſtrong deſire of bettering their condition, that maſter-ſpring of public proſperity, and, in conſequence, a moſt laudable ſpirit of induſtry and foreſight are obſerved to prevail. Theſe diſpoſitions, ſo contrary to the hopeleſs indolence remarked in deſpotic countries, are generated by the conſtitution of the Engliſh government, and the excellence of its laws, which ſecure to every individual the produce of his induſtry. When, therefore, on a compariſon with other countries, England appears to have the advantage in the ſtate of her poor, the ſuperiority is entirely to be attributed to theſe favourable circumſtances,

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and not to the poor laws. A woman with one bad feature may greatly excel in beauty ſome other, who may have this individual feature tolerably good; but it would be rather ſtrange to aſſert, in conſequence, that the ſuperior beauty of the former was occaſioned by this particular deformity. The poor laws have conſtantly tended to counteract the natural and acquired advantages of this country. Fortunately theſe advantages have been ſo conſiderable, that though weakened they could not be overcome; and to theſe advantages, together with the checks to marriage, which the laws themſelves create, it is owing that England has been able to bear up ſo long againſt this pernicious ſyſtem. Probably there is not any other country in the world, except perhaps Holland before the revolution, which could have acted upon it ſo completely, for the ſame period of time, without utter ruin.

It has been propoſed by ſome to eſtabliſh poor laws in Ireland; but from the wretched and degraded ſtate of the common people, and the total want of that decent pride, which in England prevents ſo many from having recourſe to pariſh aſſiſtance, there is little reaſon to doubt, that, on the eſtabliſhment of ſuch laws, the whole

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whole of the landed property would very ſoon be abſorbed, or the ſyſtem be given up in deſpair.

In Sweden, from the dearths which are not unfrequent, owing to the general failure of crops in an unpropitious climate, and the impoſſibility of great importations in a poor country, an attempt to eſtabliſh a ſyſtem of parochial relief ſuch as that in England, if it were not ſpeedily abandoned from the phyſical impoſſibility of executing it, would level the property of the kingdom from one end to the other, and convulſe the ſocial ſyſtem in ſuch a manner, as abſolutely to prevent it from recovering its former ſtate on the return of plenty.

Even in France, with all her advantages of ſituation and climate, the tendency to population is ſo great, and the want of foreſight among the lower claſſes of the people ſo conſpicuous, that if poor laws were eſtabliſhed the landed property would ſoon ſink under the burden, and the wretchedneſs of the people at the ſame time be increaſed. On theſe conſiderations the committee *de Mendicité*, at the beginning of the revolution, very properly and judiciouſly rejected the eſtabliſhment of ſuch a ſyſtem, which had been propoſed.

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The exception of Holland, if it were an exception, would ariſe from very particular circumſtances—her extenſive foreign trade, and her numerous colonial emigrations, compared with the ſmallneſs of her territory; and the extreme unhealthineſs of a great part of the country, which occaſions a much greater average mortality than is common in other ſtates. Theſe, I conceive, were the unobſerved cauſes, which principally contributed to render Holland ſo famous for her management of her poor, and able to employ and ſupport all who applied for relief.

No part of Germany is ſufficiently rich to ſupport an extenſive ſyſtem of parochial relief; but I am inclined to think, that from the abſence of it the lower claſſes of the people, in ſome parts of Germany, are in a better ſituation than thoſe of the ſame claſs in England. In Switzerland, for the ſame reaſon, their condition, before the late troubles, was perhaps univerſally ſuperior. And in a journey through the duchies of Holſtein and Sleſwick, belonging to Denmark, the houſes of the lower claſſes of people appeared to me to be neater and better, and in general there were fewer indications of poverty and wretchedneſs among them, than among the ſame ranks in this country.

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Even in Norway, notwithstanding the disadvantage of a severe and uncertain climate, from the little that I saw in a few weeks residence in the country, and the information that I could collect from others, I am inclined to think, that the poor were, on the average, better off than in England. Their houses and clothing were superior, and though they had no white bread, they had much more meat, fish, and milk, than our labourers; and I particularly remarked, that the farmers' boys were much stouter and healthier looking lads than those of the same description in England. This degree of happiness, superior to what could be expected from the soil and climate, arises almost exclusively from the degree in which the preventive check to population operates; and the establishment of a system of poor laws, which would destroy this check, would at once sink the lower classes of the people into a state of the most miserable poverty and wretchedness; would diminish their industry, and consequently the produce of the land and labour of the country; would weaken the resources of ingenuity in times of scarcity; and ultimately involve the country in all the horrors of continual famines.

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If, as in Ireland, and in Spain, and many of the ſouthern countries, the people be in ſo degraded a ſtate, as to propagate their ſpecies like brutes, totally regardleſs of conſequences, it matters little whether they have poor laws or not. Miſery in all its various forms muſt be the predominant check to their increaſe. Poor laws, indeed, will always tend to aggravate the evil, by diminiſhing the general reſources of the country, and in ſuch a ſtate of things could exiſt only for a very ſhort time; but with or without them, no ſtretch of human ingenuity and exertion could reſcue the people from the moſt extreme poverty and wretchedneſs.

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CHAP. VIII.

Of the modes of correcting the prevailing opinions on Population.

It is not enough to aboliſh all the poſitive inſtitutions which encourage population; but we muſt endeavour at the ſame time, to correct the prevailing opinions, which have the ſame, or perhaps even a more powerful effect. This muſt neceſſarily be a work of time; and can only be done by circulating juſter notions on theſe ſubjects, in writings and converſation; and by endeavouring to impreſs as ſtrongly as poſſible on the public mind, that it is not the duty of man ſimply to propagate his ſpecies, but to propagate virtue and happineſs; and that, if he has not a tolerably fair proſpect of doing this, he is by no means called upon to leave deſcendants.

Among the higher ranks of ſociety, we have not much reaſon to apprehend the too great frequency of marriage. Though the circulation of juſter notions on this ſubject might, even in this part of the community, do much good,

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and prevent many unhappy marriages; yet whether we make particular exertions for this purpoſe, or not, we may reſt aſſured, that the degree of proper pride and ſpirit of independence almoſt invariably connected with education and a certain rank in life will ſecure the operation of the prudential check to marriage to a conſiderable extent. All that the ſociety can reaſonably require of its members is, that they ſhould not have families without being able to ſupport them. This may be fairly enjoined as a poſitive duty. Every reſtraint beyond this muſt be conſidered as a matter of choice and taſte; but from what we already know of the habits which prevail among the higher ranks of life, we have reaſon to think that little more is wanted to attain the object required, than to award a greater degree of reſpect and of perſonal liberty to ſingle women, and to place them nearer upon a level with married women; a change, which independently of any particular purpoſe in view, the plaineſt principles of equity ſeem to demand.

If among the higher claſſes of ſociety, the object of ſecuring the operation of the prudential check to marriage to a ſufficient degree appear to be attainable without much difficulty,

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the obvious mode of proceeding with the lower classes of society, where the point is of the principal importance, is to endeavour to infuse into them a portion of that knowledge and foresight, which so much facilitates the attainment of this object in the educated part of the community.

The fairest chance of accomplishing this end would probably be by the establishment of a system of parochial education upon a plan similar to that proposed by Dr Smith.[a] In addition to the usual subjects of instruction, and those which he has mentioned, I should be disposed to lay considerable stress on the frequent explanation of the real state of the lower classes of society, as affected by the principle of population, and their consequent dependence on themselves for the chief part of their happiness or misery. It would be by no means necessary or proper in these explanations, to underrate in the smallest degree, the desirableness of marriage. It should always be represented as, what it really is, a state peculiarly suited to the nature of man, and calculated greatly to advance his happiness and remove the temptations to vice; but like property or any other desirable

[a] Wealth of Nations, vol. iii, b. v, c. i, p. 187.

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object, its advantages ſhould be ſhown to be unattainable, except under certain conditions. And a ſtrong conviction in a young man of the deſirableneſs of marriage, with a conviction at the ſame time, that the power of ſupporting a family was the only condition which would enable him really to enjoy its bleſſings, would be the moſt effectual motive imaginable to induſtry and ſobriety before marriage, and would powerfully urge him to ſave that ſuperfluity of income which ſingle labourers neceſſarily poſſeſs, for the accompliſhment of a rational and deſirable object, inſtead of diſſipating it, as is now uſually done, in idleneſs and vice.

If in the courſe of time a few of the ſimpleſt principles of political economy could be added to the inſtructions given in theſe ſchools, the benefit to ſociety would be almoſt incalculable.[a] In ſome converſations with labouring men,

[a] Dr. Smith propoſes, that the elementary parts of geometry and mechanics ſhould be taught in theſe pariſh ſchools; and I cannot help thinking, that the common principles by which markets are regulated might be made ſufficiently clear, to be of conſiderable uſe. It is certainly a ſubject that, as it intereſts the lower claſſes of people nearly, would be likely to attract their attention. At the ſame time it muſt be confeſſed, that it is impoſſible to be in any degree ſanguine on this point, recollecting

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men, during the late ſcarcities, I confeſs that I was to the laſt degree diſheartened, at obſerving their inveterate prejudices on the ſubject of grain; and I felt very ſtrongly the almoſt abſolute incompatibility of a government really free, with ſuch a degree of ignorance. The deluſions are of ſuch a nature, that if acted upon, they muſt at all events be repreſſed by force;

collecting how very ignorant in general the educated part of the community is of theſe principles. If, however, political economy cannot be taught to the common people, I really think, that it ought to form a branch of a univerſity education. Scotland has ſet us an example in this reſpect, which we ought not to be ſo ſlow to imitate. It is of the very utmoſt importance, that the gentlemen of the country, and particularly the clergy, ſhould not from ignorance aggravate the evils of ſcarcity, every time that it unfortunately occurs. During the late dearths half of the gentlemen and clergymen in the kingdom richly deſerved to have been proſecuted for ſedition. After inflaming the minds of the common people againſt the farmers and corn-dealers, by the manner in which they talked of them, or preached about them, it was but a feeble antidote to the poiſon which they had infuſed, coldly to obſerve, that, however the poor might be oppreſſed or cheated, it was their duty to keep the peace. It was little better than Antony's repeated declaration, that the conſpirators were all honourable men; which did not ſave either their houſes or their perſons from the attacks of the mob. Political economy is perhaps the only ſcience of which it may be ſaid, that the ignorance of it is not merely a deprivation of good, but produces great poſitive evil.

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and it is extremely difficult to give ſuch a power to the government as will be ſufficient at all times for this purpoſe, without the riſk of its being employed improperly, and endangering the liberty of the ſubject.

We have laviſhed immenſe ſums on the poor, which we have every reaſon to think, have conſtantly tended to aggravate their miſery. But in their education, and in the circulation of thoſe important political truths that moſt nearly concern them, which are perhaps the only means in our power of really raiſing their condition, and of making them happier men and more peaceable ſubjects, we have been miſerably deficient. It is ſurely a great national diſgrace, that the education of the lower claſſes of people in England ſhould be left merely to a few Sunday ſchools, ſupported by a ſubcription from individuals, who of courſe can give to the courſe of inſtruction in them any kind of bias which they pleaſe. And even the improvement of Sunday ſchools, (for objectionable as they are in ſome points of view, and imperfect in all, I cannot but conſider them as an improvement) is of very late date.

The arguments which have been urged againſt inſtructing the people appear to me to be

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be not only illiberal, but to the laſt degree feeble; and they ought, on the contrary, to be extremely forcible, and to be ſupported by the moſt obvious and ſtriking neceſſity, to warrant us in withholding the means of raiſing the condition of the lower claſſes of people, when they are in our power. Thoſe who will not liſten to any anſwer to theſe arguments drawn from theory, cannot, I think, refuſe the teſtimony of experience; and I would aſk, whether the advantage of ſuperior inſtruction, which the lower claſſes of people in Scotland are known to poſſeſs, has appeared to have any tendency towards creating a ſpirit of tumult and diſcontent amongſt them. And yet from the natural inferiority of its ſoil and climate, the preſſure of want is more conſtant, and the dearths are not only more frequent, but more dreadful than in England. In the caſe of Scotland, the knowledge circulated among the common people, though not ſufficient eſſentially to better their condition by increaſing, in an adequate degree, their habits of prudence and foreſight, has yet the effect of making them bear with patience the evils which they ſuffer, from being aware of the folly and inefficacy of turbulence. The quiet and peaceable habits of the inſtructed

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Scotch peaſant, compared with the turbulent diſpoſition of the ignorant Iriſhman, ought not to be without effect upon every impartial reaſoner.

The principal argument that I have heard advanced againſt a ſyſtem of national education in England is, that the common people would be put in a capacity to read ſuch works as thoſe of Paine, and that the conſequences would probably be fatal to government. But on this ſubject I agree moſt cordially with Dr. Smith[a] in thinking, that an inſtructed and well-informed people would be much leſs likely to be led away by inflammatory writings, and would be much better able to detect the falſe declamation of intereſted and ambitious demagogues, than an ignorant people. One or two readers in a pariſh are ſufficient to circulate any quantity of ſedition; and if theſe be gained to the democratic ſide, they will probably have the power of doing much more miſchief, by ſelecting the paſſages beſt ſuited to their hearers, and chooſing the moments when their oratory is likely to have the moſt effect, than if each individual in the pariſh had been in a capacity to read and judge of the whole work himſelf;

[a] Wealth of Nations, vol. iii, b. v, c. i, p. 192.

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and at the ſame time to read and judge of the oppoſing arguments, which we may ſuppoſe would alſo reach him.

But in addition to this, a double weight would undoubtedly be added to the obſervation of Dr. Smith, if theſe ſchools were made the means of inſtructing the people in the real nature of their ſituation; if they were taught, what is really true, that without an increaſe of their own induſtry and prudence no change of government could eſſentially better their condition; that, though they might get rid of ſome particular grievance, yet in the great point of ſupporting their families they would be but little, or perhaps not at all benefitted; that a revolution would not alter in their favour the proportion of the ſupply of labour to the demand, or the quantity of food to the number of the conſumers; and that if the ſupply of labour were greater than the demand, and the demand for food greater than the ſupply, they might ſuffer the utmoſt ſeverity of want, under the freeſt, the moſt perfect, and beſt executed government, that the human imagination could conceive.

A knowledge of theſe truths ſo obviouſly tends to promote peace and quietneſs, to weaken the

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the effect of inflammatory writings, and to prevent all unreaſonable and ill-directed oppoſition to the conſtituted authorities, that thoſe who would ſtill object to the inſtruction of the people may fairly be ſuſpected of a wiſh to encourage their ignorance, as a pretext for tyranny, and an opportunity of increaſing the power and the influence of the executive government.

Beſides explaining the real ſituation of the lower claſſes of ſociety, as depending principally upon themſelves for their happineſs or miſery, the parochial ſchools would, by early inſtruction and the judicious diſtribution of rewards, have the faireſt chance of training up the riſing generation in habits of ſobriety, induſtry, independence, and prudence, and in a proper diſcharge of their religious duties; which would raiſe them from their preſent degraded ſtate, and approximate them, in ſome degree, to the middle claſſes of ſociety, whoſe habits, generally ſpeaking, are certainly ſuperior.

In moſt countries among the lower claſſes of people, there appears to be ſomething like a ſtandard of wretchedneſs, a point below which they will not continue to marry and propagate their ſpecies. This ſtandard is different in different countries, and is formed by various concurring circumſtances

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cumſtances of ſoil, climate, government, degree of knowledge, and civilization, &c. The principal circumſtances which contribute to raiſe it are liberty, ſecurity of property, the ſpread of knowledge, and a taſte for the conveniences and the comforts of life. Thoſe which contribute principally to lower it are deſpotiſm and ignorance.

In an attempt to better the condition of the lower claſſes of ſociety, our object ſhould be to raiſe this ſtandard as high as poſſible, by cultivating a ſpirit of independence, a decent pride, and a taſte for cleanlineſs and comfort. The effect of a good government in increaſing the prudential habits and perſonal reſpectability of the lower claſſes of ſociety has already been inſiſted on; but certainly this effect will always be incomplete without a good ſyſtem of education, and indeed it may be ſaid, that no government can approach to perfection, that does not provide for the inſtruction of the people. The benefits derived from education are among thoſe, which may be enjoyed without reſtriction of numbers; and as it is in the power of governments to confer theſe benefits, it is undoubtedly their duty to do it.

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CHAP. IX.

Of the direction of our charity.

An important and intereſting inquiry yet remains, relating to the mode of directing our private charity, ſo as not to interfere with the great object in view, of meliorating the condition of the lower claſſes of people, by preventing the population from preſſing too hard againſt the limits of the means of ſubſiſtence.

The emotion which prompts us to relieve our fellow-creatures in diſtreſs is, like all our other natural paſſions, general, and in ſome degree indiſcriminate and blind. Our feelings of compaſſion may be worked up to a higher pitch by a well-wrought ſcene in a play, or a fictitious tale in a novel, than by almoſt any events in real life: and if among ten petitioners we were to liſten only to the firſt impulſes of our feelings, without making further inquiries, we ſhould undoubtedly give our aſſiſtance to the beſt actor of the party. It is evident therefore, that the

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the impulse of benevolence, like the impulses of love, of anger, of ambition, the desire of eating and drinking, or any other of our natural propensities, must be regulated by experience, and frequently brought to the test of utility, or it will defeat its intended purpose.

The apparent object of the passion between the sexes is the continuation of the species, and the formation of such an intimate union of views and interests between two persons, as will best promote their happiness, and at the same time secure the proper degree of attention to the helplessness of infancy and the education of the rising generation; but if every man were to obey at all times the impulses of nature in the gratification of this passion, without regard to consequences, the principal part of these important objects would not be attained, and even the continuation of the species might be defeated by a promiscuous intercourse.

The apparent end of the impulse of benevolence is, to draw the whole human race together, but more particularly that part of it which is of our own nation and kindred, in the bonds of brotherly love; and by giving men an interest in the happiness and misery of their fellow-creatures, to prompt them, as they have power,

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to mitigate the partial evils arising from general laws, and thus to increase the sum of human happiness; but if our benevolence be indiscriminate, and the degree of apparent distress be made the sole measure of our liberality, it is evident, that it will be exercised almost exclusively upon common beggars, while modest unobtrusive merit, struggling with unavoidable difficulties, yet still maintaining some slight appearences of decency and cleanliness, will be totally neglected. We shall raise the worthless above the worthy; we shall encourage indolence and check industry; and in the most marked manner subtract from the sum of human happiness.

Our experience has indeed informed us, that the impulse of benevolence is not so strong as the passion between the sexes, and that generally speaking, there is much less danger to be apprehended from the indulgence of the former than of the latter; but independently of this experience, and of the moral codes founded upon it, a youth of eighteen would be as completely justified in indulging the sexual passion with every object capable of exciting it, as in following indiscriminately every impulse of his benevolence. They are both natural passions, which are excited

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cited by their appropriate objects, and to the gratification of which we are prompted by the pleaſurable ſenſations which accompany them. As animals, or till we know their conſequences, our only buſineſs is to follow theſe dictates of nature; but as reaſonable beings, we are under the ſtrongeſt obligations to attend to their conſequences; and if they be evil to ourſelves or others, we may juſtly conſider it as an indication, that ſuch a mode of indulging theſe paſſions is not ſuited to our ſtate, or conformable to the will of God. As moral agents therefore, it is clearly our duty to reſtrain their indulgence in theſe particular directions; and by thus carefully examining the conſequences of our natural paſſions, and frequently bringing them to the teſt of utility, gradually to acquire a habit of gratifying them only in that way, which, being unattended with evil, will clearly add to the ſum of human happineſs, and fulfil the apparent purpoſe of the Creator.

Though utility therefore can never be the immediate excitement to the gratification of any paſſion, it is the teſt by which alone we can know, whether it ought or ought not to be indulged; and is therefore the ſureſt foundation of all morality, which can be collected from the

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the light of nature. All the moral codes, which have inculcated the ſubjection of the paſſions to reaſon, have been, as I conceive, really built upon this foundation, whether the promulgators of them were aware of it or not.

I remind the reader of theſe truths, in order to apply them to the habitual direction of our charity; and if we keep the criterion of utility conſtantly in view, we may find ample room for the exerciſe of our benevolence, without interfering with the great purpoſe, which we have to accompliſh.

One of the moſt valuable parts of charity is its effect upon the giver. It is more bleſſed to give, than to receive. Suppoſing it to be allowed, that the exerciſe of our benevolence in acts of charity is not, upon the whole, really beneficial to the poor; yet we could never ſanction any endeavour to extinguiſh an impulſe, the proper gratification of which has ſo evident a tendency to purify and exalt the human mind. But it is particularly ſatisfactory and pleaſing to find, that the mode of exerciſing our charity, which, when brought to the teſt of utility, will appear to be moſt beneficial to the poor, is preciſely that, which will have the beſt and moſt improving effect on the mind of the donor.

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The quality of charity, like that of mercy,

> " is not ſtrained;
> " It droppeth as the gentle rain from Heav'n
> " Upon the earth beneath."

The immenſe ſums diſtributed to the poor in this country, by the parochial laws, are improperly called charity. They want its moſt diſtinguiſhing attribute; and, as it might be expected from an attempt to force that which loſes its eſſence the moment that it ceaſes to be voluntary, their effects upon thoſe from whom they are collected are as prejudicial as on thoſe to whom they are diſtributed. On the ſide of the receivers of this miſcalled charity, inſtead of real relief, we find accumulated diſtreſs and more extended poverty; on the ſide of the givers, inſtead of pleaſurable ſenſations, unceaſing diſcontent and irritation.

In the great charitable inſtitutions ſupported by voluntary contributions, ſome of which are certainly of a prejudicial tendency, the ſubſcriptions, I am inclined to fear, are ſometimes given grudgingly, and rather becauſe they are expected by the world from certain ſtations and certain fortunes, than becauſe they are prompted by motives of genuine benevolence; and as the greater part of the ſubſcribers do not intereſt themſelves in the management of the funds, or

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in the fate of the particular objects relieved, it is not to be expected, that this kind of charity ſhould have any ſtrikingly beneficial influence on the minds of the majority who exerciſe it.

Even in the relief of common beggars, we ſhall find, that we are often as much influenced by the deſire of getting rid of the importunities of a diſguſting object, as by the pleaſure of relieving it. We wiſh that it had not fallen in our way, rather than rejoice in the opportunity given us of aſſiſting a fellow-creature. We feel a painful emotion at the ſight of ſo much apparent miſery; but the pittance we give does not relieve it. We know that it is totally inadequate to produce any eſſential effect. We know beſides, that we ſhall be addreſſed in the ſame manner at the corner of the next ſtreet; and we know that we are liable to the groſſeſt impoſitions. We hurry therefore ſometimes by them, and ſhut our ears to their importunate demands. We give no more than we can help giving without doing actual violence to our feelings. Our charity is in ſome degree forced; and, like forced charity, it leaves no ſatisfactory impreſſion on the mind, and cannot therefore have any very beneficial and improving effect on the heart and affections.

But it is far otherwiſe with that voluntary and

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and active charity, which makes itself acquainted with the objects which it relieves; which seems to feel, and to be proud of the bond that unites the rich with the poor; which enters into their houses, informs itself not only of their wants, but of their habits and dispositions; checks the hopes of clamorous and obtrusive poverty, with no other recommendation but rags; and encourages, with adequate relief, the silent and retiring sufferer, labouring under unmerited difficulties. This mode of exercising our charity presents a very different picture from that of any other; and its contrast with the common mode of parish relief cannot be better described than in the words of Mr. Townsend, in the conclusion of his admirable dissertation on the Poor Laws. "Nothing in nature can be more disgusting "than a parish pay-table, attendant upon which, "in the same objects of misery, are too often "found combined, snuff, gin, rags, vermin, in- "solence, and abusive language: nor in nature "can any thing be more beautiful than the "mild complacency of benevolence hastening "to the humble cottage to relieve the wants "of industry and virtue, to feed the hungry, "to clothe the naked, and to soothe the sor- "rows of the widow with her tender orphans;

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" nothing can be more pleaſing, unleſs it be " their ſparkling eyes, their burſting tears, and " their upliſted hands, the artleſs expreſſions of " unfeigned gratitude for unexpected favours. " Such ſcenes will frequently occur, whenever " men ſhall have power to diſpoſe of their own " property."

I conceive it to be almoſt impoſſible, that any perſon could be much engaged in ſuch ſcenes without daily making advances in virtue. No exerciſe of our affections can have a more evident tendency to purify and exalt the human mind. It is almoſt excluſively this ſpecies of charity, that bleſſeth him that gives; and, in a general view, it is almoſt excluſively this ſpecies of charity, which bleſſeth him that takes; at leaſt it may be aſſerted, that there is hardly any other mode of exerciſing our charity, in which large ſums can be diſtributed, without a greater chance of producing evil than good.

The diſcretionary power of giving or withholding relief, which is, to a certain extent, veſted in pariſh officers and juſtices, is of a very different nature, and will have a very different effect, from the diſcrimination which may be exerciſed by voluntary charity. Every man in this country, under certain circumſtances,

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ſtances, is entitled by law to pariſh aſſiſtance; and unleſs his diſqualification be clearly proved, has a right to complain if it be withheld. The inquiries neceſſary to ſettle this point, and the extent of the relief to be granted, too often produce evaſion and lying on the part of the petitioner, and afford an opening to partiality and oppreſſion in the overſeer. If the propoſed relief be given, it is of courſe received with unthankfulneſs; and if it be denied, the party generally thinks himſelf ſeverely aggrieved, and feels reſentment and indignation at his treatment

In the diſtribution of voluntary charity, nothing of this kind can take place. The perſon who receives it is made the proper ſubject of the pleaſurable ſenſation of gratitude; and thoſe who do not receive it cannot poſſibly conceive themſelves in the ſlighteſt degree injured. Every man has a right to do what he will with his own, and cannot, in juſtice, be called upon to render a reaſon why he gives in the one caſe, and abſtains from it in the other. This kind of deſpotic power, eſſential to voluntary charity, gives the greateſt facility to the ſelection of worthy objects of relief, without being accompanied by any ill conſequences; and has further

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a moſt beneficial effect from the degree of uncertainty, which muſt neceſſarily be attached to it. It is in the higheſt degree important to the general happineſs of the poor, that no man ſhould look to charity as a fund, on which he may confidently depend. He ſhould be taught that his own exertions, his own induſtry and foreſight, were his only juſt ground of dependence; that if theſe failed, aſſiſtance in his diſtreſſes could only be the ſubject of rational hope; and that even the foundation of this hope muſt be in his own good conduct, and the conſciouſneſs that he had not involved himſelf in theſe difficulties by his indolence or imprudence.

That in the diſtribution of our charity we are under a ſtrong moral obligation to inculcate this leſſon on the poor by a proper diſcrimination, is a truth of which I cannot feel a doubt. If all could be completely relieved, and poverty baniſhed from the country, even at the expenſe of three fourths of the fortunes of the rich, I would be the laſt to ſay a ſingle ſyllable againſt relieving all, and making the degree of diſtreſs alone the meaſure of our bounty. But as experience has proved, I believe without a ſingle exception, that poverty and miſery have always increaſed in proportion to the quantity of indiſcriminate

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criminate charity, are we not bound to infer, reaſoning as we uſually do from the laws of nature, that it is an intimation that ſuch a mode of diſtribution is not the proper office of benevolence?

The laws of nature ſay, with St. Paul, "If a "man will not work, neither ſhall he eat." They alſo ſay, that he is not raſhly to truſt to Providence. They appear indeed to be conſtant and uniform for the expreſs purpoſe of telling him what he is to truſt to, and that, if he marry without being able to ſupport a family, he muſt expect ſevere want. Theſe intimations appear from the conſtitution of human nature to be abſolutely neceſſary, and to have a ſtrikingly beneficial tendency. If in the direction either of our public or our private charity we ſay, that though a man will not work, yet he ſhall eat; and though he marry without being able to ſupport a family, yet his family ſhall be ſupported: it is evident, that we do not merely endeavour to mitigate the partial evils ariſing from general laws, but regularly and ſyſtematically to counteract the obviouſly beneficial effects of theſe general laws themſelves. And we cannot eaſily conceive, that the Deity ſhould implant

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any paſſion in the human breaſt for ſuch a purpoſe.

In the great courſe of human events, the beſt-founded expectations will ſometimes be diſappointed; and induſtry, prudence, and virtue, not only fail of their juſt reward, but be involved in unmerited calamities. Thoſe who are thus ſuffering in ſpite of the beſt-directed endeavours to avoid it, and from cauſes which they could not be expected to foreſee, are the genuine objects of charity. In relieving theſe we exerciſe the appropriate office of benevolence, that of mitigating the partial evils ariſing from general laws; and in this direction of our charity therefore we need not apprehend any ill conſequences. Such objects ought to be relieved, according to our means, liberally and adequately, even though the worthleſs were ſtarving.

When indeed this firſt claim on our benevolence was ſatisfied, we might then turn our attention to the idle and improvident; but the intereſts of human happineſs moſt clearly require, that the relief which we afford them ſhould be ſcanty. We may perhaps take upon ourſelves, with great caution, to mi-

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tigate the punishments which they are suffering from the laws of nature, but on no account to remove them entirely. They are deservedly at the bottom in the scale of society; and if we raise them from this situation, we not only palpably defeat the end of benevolence, but commit a most glaring injustice to those who are above them. They should on no account be enabled to command so much of the necessaries of life, as can be obtained by the worst-paid common labour. The browneſt bread, with the coarſeſt and ſcantieſt apparel, is the utmoſt which they ſhould have the means of purchaſing.

It is evident, that theſe reaſonings do not apply to thoſe caſes of urgent diſtreſs ariſing from diſaſtrous accidents, unconnected with habits of indolence and improvidence. If a man break a leg or an arm, we are not to ſtop to inquire into his moral character, before we lend him our aſſiſtance; but in this caſe we are perfectly conſiſtent, and the touchſtone of utility completely juſtifies our conduct. By affording the moſt indiſcriminate aſſiſtance in this way, we are in little danger of encouraging people to break their arms and legs. According to the touchſtone of utility, the high approbation which

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which Chriſt gave to the conduct of the good Samaritan, who followed the immediate impulſe of his benevolence in relieving a ſtranger in the urgent diſtreſs of an accident, does not, in the ſmalleſt degree, contradict the expreſſion of St. Paul, "If a man will not work, neither "ſhall he eat."

We are not however, in any caſe, to loſe a preſent opportunity of doing good, from the mere ſuppoſition that we may poſſibly meet with a worthier object. In all doubtful caſes, it may ſafely be laid down as our duty to follow the natural impulſe of our benevolence; but when, in fulfilling our obligations as reaſonable beings to attend to the conſequences of our actions, we have, from our own experience and that of others, drawn the concluſion, that the exerciſe of our benevolence in one mode is prejudicial, and in another is beneficial in its effects, we are certainly bound, as moral agents, to check our natural propenſities in the one direction, and to encourage them and acquire the habits of exerciſing them in the other.

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CHAP. X.

Different plans of improving the condition of the Poor considered.

In the distribution of our charity, or in any efforts which we may make to better the condition of the lower classes of society, there is another point relating to the main argument of this work, to which we must be particularly attentive. We must on no account do any thing, which tends directly to encourage marriage, or to remove, in any regular and systematic manner, that inequality of circumstances, which ought always to exist between the single man and the man with a family. The writers who have best understood the principle of population appear to me all to have fallen into very important errors on this point.

Sir James Steuart, who is fully aware of what he calls vicious procreation, and of the misery that attends a redundant population, recommends, notwithstanding, the general establishment of foundling hospitals; the taking of children under certain circumstances from their parents,

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parents, and ſupporting them at the expenſe of the ſtate; and particularly laments the inequality of condition between the married and ſingle man, ſo ill-proportioned to their reſpective wants.[a] He forgets, in theſe inſtances, that if, without the encouragement to multiplication, of foundling hoſpitals, or of public ſupport for the children of ſome married perſons, and under the diſcouragement of great pecuniary diſadvantages on the ſide of the married man, population be ſtill redundant, which is evinced by the inability of the poor to maintain all their children; it is a clear proof, that the funds deſtined for the maintenance of labour cannot properly ſupport a greater population; and that, if further encouragements to multiplication be given and diſcouragements removed, the reſult muſt be, an increaſe ſomewhere or other of that vicious procreation, which he ſo juſtly reprobates.

Mr. Townſend, who in his diſſertation on the Poor Laws has treated this ſubject with great ſkill and perſpicuity, appears to me to conclude with a propoſal, which violates the principles on which he had reaſoned ſo well. He wiſhes to make the benefit clubs, or friendly

[a] Political Œconomy, vol. i, b. i, c. xiii.

ſocieties,

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ſocieties, which are now voluntarily eſtabliſhed in many pariſhes, compulſory and univerſal; and propoſes as a regulation, that an unmarried man ſhould pay a fourth part of his wages, and a married man with four children, not more than a thirtieth part.[a]

I muſt firſt remark, that the moment theſe ſubſcriptions are made compulſory, they will neceſſarily operate exactly like a direct tax upon labour, which, as Dr. Smith juſtly ſtates, will always be paid, and in a more expenſive manner, by the conſumer. The landed intereſt therefore would receive no relief from this plan, but would pay the ſame ſum as at preſent, only in the advanced price of labour and of commodities, inſtead of in the pariſh rates. A compulſory ſubſcription of this kind would have almoſt all the ill effects of the preſent ſyſtem of relief, and though altered in name would ſtill poſſeſs the eſſential ſpirit of the poor laws.

Dean Tucker, in ſome remarks on a plan of the ſame kind, propoſed by Mr. Pew, obſerved, that after much talk and reflection on the ſubject, he had come to the concluſion, that they muſt be voluntary aſſociations, and not compulſory aſſemblies. A voluntary ſubſcription is

[a] Diſſertation on the Poor Laws, p. 89, 2d. edit. 1787.

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like a tax upon a luxury, and does not neceſſarily raiſe the price of labour.

It ſhould be recollected alſo, that in a voluntary aſſociation of a ſmall extent, over which each individual member can exerciſe a ſuperintendence, it is highly probable, that the original agreements will all be ſtrictly fulfilled, or if they be not, every man may at leaſt have the redreſs of withdrawing himſelf from the club. But in an univerſal compulſory ſubſcription, which muſt neceſſarily become a national concern, there would be no ſecurity whatever for the fulfilment of the original agreements; and when the funds failed, which they certainly would do, when all the idle and diſſolute were included, inſtead of ſome of the moſt induſtrious and provident, as at preſent, a larger ſubſcription would probably be demanded, and no man would have the right to refuſe it. The evil would thus go on increaſing as the poor rates do now. If indeed the aſſiſtance given were always ſpecific, and on no account to be increaſed, as in the preſent voluntary aſſociations, this would certainly be a ſtriking advantage; but the ſame advantage might be completely attained by a ſimilar diſtribution of the ſums collected by the pariſh rates. On the whole therefore,

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therefore, it appears to me, that, if the friendly ſocieties were made univerſal and compulſory, it would be merely a different mode of collecting pariſh rates; and any particular mode of diſtribution might be as well adopted upon one ſyſtem as upon the other.

With regard to the propoſal of making ſingle men pay a fourth part of their earnings weekly, and married men with families only a thirtieth part, it would evidently operate as a heavy fine upon bachelors, and a high bounty upon children; and is therefore directly adverſe to the general ſpirit, in which Mr. Townſend's excellent diſſertation is written. Before he introduces this propoſal, he lays it down as a general principle, that no ſyſtem for the relief of the poor can be good, which does not regulate population by the demand for labour;[a] but this propoſal clearly tends to encourage population without any reference to the demand for labour, and puniſhes a young man for his prudence in refraining from marriage, at a time perhaps, when this demand is ſo ſmall, that the wages of labour are totally inadequate to the ſupport of a family. I ſhould be averſe to any compulſory ſyſtem whatever for the poor; but certainly if

[a] P. 84.

ſingle

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ſingle men were compelled to pay a contribution for the future contingencies of the married ſtate, they ought in juſtice to receive a benefit proportioned to the period of their privation; and the man who had contributed a fourth of his earnings for merely one year ought not to be put upon a level with him, who had contributed this proportion for ten years.

Mr. Arthur Young, in moſt of his works, appears clearly to underſtand the principle of population, and is fully aware of the evils, which muſt neceſſarily reſult from an increaſe of people beyond the demand for labour and the means of comfortable ſubſiſtence. In his tour through France he has particularly laboured this point, and ſhown moſt forcibly the miſery, which reſults in that country from the exceſs of population occaſioned by the too great diviſion of property. Such an increaſe he juſtly calls merely a multiplication of wretchedneſs. "Couples marry and procreate on the idea, "not the reality, of a maintenance; they in-"creaſe beyond the demand of towns and "manufactures; and the conſequence is, diſ-"treſs, and numbers dying of diſeaſes ariſing "from inſufficient nouriſhment."[a]

[a] Travels in France, vol. i, c. xii, p, 408.

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In another place he quotes a very ſenſible paſſage from the report of the committee of mendicity, which, alluding to the evils of overpopulation, concludes thus, " Il faudroit enfin " neceſſairement que le prix de travail baiſſat " par la plus grand concurrence de travailleurs, " d'ou reſulteroit un indigence complette pour " ceux qui ne trouveroient pas de travail, et " une ſubſiſtence incomplette pour ceux mêmes " auxquels il ne ſeroit pas refuſé." And in remarking upon this paſſage, he obſerves, " France itſelf affords an irrefragable proof of " the truth of theſe ſentiments; for I am " clearly of opinion, from the obſervations I " made in every province of the kingdom, " that her population is ſo much beyond the " proportion of her induſtry and labour, that " ſhe would be much more powerful and in- " finitely more flouriſhing, if ſhe had five or " ſix millions leſs of inhabitants. From her " too great population ſhe preſents in every " quarter ſuch ſpectacles of wretchedneſs, as " are abſolutely inconſiſtent with that degree " of national felicity, which ſhe was capable of " attaining, even under the old government. " A traveller much leſs attentive than I was to " objects of this kind muſt ſee at every turn

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" moſt unequivocal ſigns of diſtreſs. That theſe " ſhould exiſt, no one can wonder, who con- " ſiders the price of labour and of proviſions, " and the miſery into which a ſmall riſe in the " price of wheat throws the lower claſſes.[a]"

" If you would ſee," he ſays, " a diſtrict " with as little diſtreſs in it as is conſiſtent " with the political ſyſtem of the old govern- " ment of France, you muſt aſſuredly go where " there are no little proprietors at all. You muſt " viſit the great farms in Beauce, Picardy, part " of Normandy, and Artois, and there you will " find no more population than what is regu- " larly employed and regularly paid; and if in " ſuch diſtricts you ſhould, contrary to this " rule, meet with much diſtreſs, it is twenty to " one but that it is in a pariſh which has ſome " commons, which tempt the poor to have " cattle—to have property—and in conſequence " miſery. When you are engaged in this po- " litical tour, finiſh it by ſeeing England, and " I will ſhow you a ſet of peaſants well clothed, " well nouriſhed, tolerably drunken from ſuper- " fluity, well lodged, and at their eaſe; and yet " amongſt them, not one in a thouſand has " either land or cattle.[b]" A little further on,

[a] Travels in France vol i, c. xvii, p. 469. [b] Id. p. 471.

alluding

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alluding to encouragements to marriage, he ſays of France; "the predominant evil of the king-"dom is the having ſo great a population, "that ſhe can neither employ, nor feed it; why "then encourage marriage? would you breed "more people, becauſe you have more already "than you know what to do with? You have "ſo great a competition for food, that your "people are ſtarving or in miſery; and you "would encourage the production of more, to "increaſe that competition. It may almoſt "be queſtioned, whether the contrary policy "ought not to be embraced; whether diffi-"culties ſhould not be laid on the marriage "of thoſe, who cannot make it appear, that they "have the proſpect of maintaining the children "that ſhall be the fruit of it? But why en-"courage marriages, which are ſure to take "place in all ſituations, in which they ought to "take place? There is no inſtance to be found "of plenty of regular employment being firſt "eſtabliſhed, where marriages have not fol-"lowed in a proportionate degree. The po-"licy therefore, at beſt, is uſeleſs, and may be "pernicious."

After having once ſo clearly underſtood the principle of population, as to expreſs theſe and

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many other ſentiments on the ſubject, equally juſt and important, it is not a little ſurpriſing to find Mr. Young in a pamphlet, entitled, *The Queſtion of Scarcity plainly ſtated, and Remedies conſidered, (publiſhed in* 1800*)*, obſerving, that "the means, which would of all others perhaps "tend moſt ſurely to prevent future ſcarcities "ſo oppreſſive to the poor as the preſent, "would be to ſecure to every country labourer "in the kingdom, that has three children and "upwards, half an acre of land for potatoes; "and graſs enough to feed one or two cows.[a] "* * * * If each had his ample potato ground "and a cow, the price of wheat would be of "little more conſequence to them, than it is "to their brethren in Ireland."

"Every one admits the ſyſtem to be good, "but the queſtion is how to enforce it."

I was by no means aware, that the excellence of the ſyſtem had been ſo generally admitted. For myſelf I ſtrongly proteſt againſt being included in the general term of *every one*, as I ſhould conſider the adoption of this ſyſtem, as the moſt cruel and fatal blow to the happineſs of the lower claſſes of people in this country, that they had ever received.

[a] P. 77.

Mr.

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Mr. Young however goes on to say, that "The magnitude of the object should make us "disregard any difficulties, but such as are in- "superable: none such would probably occur, "if something like the following means were "resorted to.

"I. Where there are common pastures, to "give to a labouring man having chil- "dren, a right to demand an allotment propor- "tioned to the family, to be set out by the "parish officers, &c. * * * and a cow bought. "Such labourer to have both for life, paying "40s. a year till the price of the cow, &c. was "reimbursed: at his death to go to the labour- "er having the most numerous family, for life, "paying shillings a week to the widow "of his predecessor.

"II. Labourers thus demanding allotments "by reason of their families to have land as- "signed and cows bought, till the proportion so "allotted amounts to one of the extent of "the common.

"III. In parishes where there are no com- "mons, and the quality of the land adequate, "every cottager having children, to "whose cottage there is not within a given "time land sufficient for a cow, and half an

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" acre of potatoes, assigned at a fair average " rent, subject to appeal to the sessions, to have " a right to demand shillings per week " of the parish for every child, till such land be " assigned; leaving to landlords and tenants the " means of doing it. Cows to be found by the " parish under an annual reimbursement.[a]"

" The great object is, by means of milk and " potatoes, to take the mass of the country poor " from the consumption of wheat, and to give " them substitutes equally wholesome and nou- " rishing, and as independent of scarcities, na- " tural and artificial, as the providence of the " Almighty will admit.[b]"

Would not this plan operate, in the most direct manner, as an encouragement to marriage and bounty on children, which Mr. Young has with so much justice reprobated in his travels in France? and does he seriously think, that it would be an eligible thing to feed the mass of the people in this country on milk and potatoes, and make them as independent of the price of corn, and of the demand for labour, as their brethren in Ireland?

The specific cause of the poverty and misery of the lower classes of people in France and Ireland is, that from the extreme subdivision of

[a] P. 78. [b] P. 79.

property

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property in the one country, and the facility of obtaining a cabin and potatoes in the other, a population is brought into exiſtence, which is not demanded by the quantity of capital and employment in the country; and the conſequence of which muſt therefore neceſſarily be, as is very juſtly expreſſed in the report of the committee of mendicity before mentioned, to lower in general the price of labour by too great competition; from which muſt reſult complete indigence to thoſe who cannot find employment, and an incomplete ſubſiſtence even to thoſe who can.

The obvious tendency of Mr. Young's plan is, by encouraging marriage and furniſhing a cheap food, independent of the price of corn, and of courſe of the demand for labour, to place the lower claſſes of people exactly in this ſituation.

It may perhaps be ſaid, that our poor laws at preſent regularly encourage marriage and children, by diſtributing relief in proportion to the ſize of families; and that this plan, which is propoſed as a ſubſtitute, would merely do the ſame thing in a leſs objectionable manner. But ſurely, in endeavouring to get rid of the evil of the poor laws, we ought not to retain their moſt

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pernicious quality: and Mr. Young muſt know as well as I do, that the principal reaſon why poor laws have invariably been found ineffectual in the relief of the poor is, that they tend to encourage a population, which is not regulated by the demand for labour. Mr. Young himſelf, indeed, expreſsly takes notice of this effect in England, and obſerves, that notwithſtanding the unrivalled proſperity of her manufactures, "population is ſometimes too active, "as we ſee clearly by the dangerous increaſe of "poor's rates in country villages."[a]

But the fact is, that Mr. Young's plan would be incomparably more powerful in encouraging a population beyond the demand for labour, than our preſent poor laws. A laudable repugnance to the receiving of pariſh relief, ariſing partly from a ſpirit of independence not yet extinct, and partly from the diſagreeable mode in which the relief is given, undoubtedly deters many from marrying with a certainty of falling on the pariſh; and the proportion of births and marriages to the whole population, which has before been noticed, clearly proves, that the poor laws do not encourage marriage ſo much as might be expected from theory. But the caſe

[a] Travels in France, vol. i, c. xvii, p. 470.

would

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would be very different, if, when a labourer had an early marriage in contemplation the terrific forms of workhouſes and pariſh officers, which might diſturb his reſolution, were to be exchanged for the faſcinating viſions of land and cows. If the love of property, as Mr. Young has repeatedly ſaid, will make a man do much, it would be rather ſtrange if it would not make him marry; an action to which, it appears from experience, that he is by no means diſinclined.

The population, which would be thus called into being, would be ſupported by the extended cultivation of potatoes, and would of courſe go on without any reference to the demand for labour. In the preſent ſtate of things, notwithſtanding the flouriſhing condition of our manufactures, and the numerous checks to our population, there is no practical problem ſo difficult, as to find employment for the poor; but this difficulty would evidently be aggravated a hundred fold, under the circumſtances here ſuppoſed.

In Ireland, or in any other country, where the common food is potatoes, and every man who wiſhes to marry may obtain a piece of ground ſufficient, when planted with this root, to ſupport a family, prizes may be given till the treaſury

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ſury is exhauſted for eſſays on the beſt means of employing the poor; but till ſome ſtop to the progreſs of population naturally ariſing from this ſtate of things takes place, the object in view is really a phyſical impoſſibility.[a]

Mr. Young has intimated, that, if the people were fed upon milk and potatoes, they would be more independent of ſcarcities than at preſent; but why this ſhould be the caſe I really cannot comprehend. Undoubtedly people who live upon potatoes will not be much affected by a ſcarcity of wheat; but is there any contradiction in the ſuppoſition of a failure in the crops of potatoes? I believe it is generally underſtood, that they are more liable to ſuffer damage during the winter than grain. From the much greater quantity of food yielded by a given piece of land when planted with potatoes, than under any other kind of cultivation, it would

[a] Dr. Crumpe's prize eſſay on the beſt means of finding employment for the people is an excellent treatiſe, and contains moſt valuable information; but till the capital of the country is better proportioned to its population, it is perfectly chimerical, to expect ſucceſs in any project of the kind. I am alſo ſtrongly diſpoſed to believe, that the indolent and turbulent habits of the lower Iriſh can never be corrected, while the potatoe ſyſtem enables them to increaſe ſo much beyond the regular demand for labour.

naturally

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naturally happen, that, for some time after the introduction of this root as the general food of the lower classes of people, a greater quantity would be grown than was demanded, and they would live in plenty. Mr. Young, in his Travels through France, observes, that, "In districts "which contain immense quantities of waste "land of a certain degree of fertility, as in the "roots of the Pyrenees, belonging to com- "munities ready to sell them, economy and "industry, animated with the views of settling "and marrying, flourish greatly; in such neigh- "bourhoods something like an American in- "crease takes place, and if the land be cheap "little distress is found. But as procreation "goes on rapidly under such circumstances, the "least check to subsistence is attended with "great misery; as wastes becoming dearer, or "the best portions being sold, or difficulties "arising in the acquisition; all which circum- "stances I met with in those mountains. The "moment that any impediment happens, the "distress of such people will be proportioned "to the activity and vigour, which had ani- "mated population."[a]

This description will apply exactly to what

[a] Travels in France, vol. i, c. xvii, p. 409.

would

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would take place in this country, on the diſtribution of ſmall portions of land to the common people, and the introduction of potatoes as their general food. For a time the change might appear beneficial, and of courſe the idea of property would make it, at firſt, highly acceptable to the poor; but as Mr. Young in another place ſays, "You preſently arrive at the limit, beyond "which the earth, cultivate it as you pleaſe, "will feed no more mouths; yet thoſe ſimple "manners, which inſtigate to marriage, ſtill "continue; what then is the conſequence, but "the moſt dreadful miſery imaginable?"[1]

When the commons were all divided, and difficulties began to occur in procuring potato grounds, the habits of early marriages, which had been introduced, would occaſion the moſt complicated diſtreſs; and when from the increaſing population, and diminiſhing ſources of ſubſiſtence, the average growth of potatoes was not more than the average conſumption, a ſcarcity of potatoes would be, in every reſpect, as probable as a ſcarcity of wheat at preſent, and when it did arrive, it would be beyond all compariſon more dreadful.

When the common people of a country live

[1] Travels in France, vol. i, c. xvii, p. 409.

principally

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principally upon the deareſt grain, as they do in England on wheat, they have great reſources in a ſcarcity; and barley, oats, rice, cheap ſoups, and potatoes, all preſent themſelves as leſs expenſive, yet at the ſame time wholeſome means of nouriſhment; but when their habitual food is the loweſt in this ſcale, they appear to be abſolutely without reſource, except in the bark of trees, like the poor Swedes; and a great portion of them muſt neceſſarily be ſtarved. Wheaten bread, roaſt beef, and turbot, which might not fail at the ſame time, are indeed in themſelves unexceptionable ſubſtitutes for potatoes, and would probably be accepted as ſuch without murmuring by the common people; but the misfortune is, that a large population, which had been habitually ſupported by milk and potatoes, would find it difficult to obtain theſe ſubſtitutes in ſufficient quantities, even if the whole benevolence of the kingdom were called into action for the purpoſe.

The wages of labour will always be regulated by the proportion of the ſupply to the demand. And as, upon the potato ſyſtem, a ſupply more than adequate to the demand would very ſoon take place, and this ſupply might be continued at a very cheap rate, on account of the cheapneſs

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neſs of the food which would furniſh it, the common price of labour would ſoon be regulated principally by the price of potatoes inſtead of the price of wheat, as at preſent; and the rags and wretched cabins of Ireland would follow of courſe.

When the demand for labour occaſionally exceeds the ſupply, and wages are regulated by the price of the deareſt grain, they will generally be ſuch as to yield ſomething beſides mere food, and the common people may be able to obtain decent houſes and decent clothing. If the contraſt between the ſtate of the French and Engliſh labourers, which Mr. Young has drawn, be in any degree near the truth, the advantage on the ſide of England has been occaſioned preciſely and excluſively by theſe two circumſtances; and if, by the adoption of milk and potatoes as the general food of the common people, theſe circumſtances were totally altered, ſo as to make the ſupply of labour conſtantly in a great exceſs above the demand for it, and regulate wages by the price of the cheapeſt food, the advantage would be immediately loſt, and no efforts of benevolence could prevent the moſt general and abject poverty.

Upon the ſame principle it would by no means

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means be eligible, that the cheap ſoups of Count Rumford ſhould be adopted as the general food of the common people. They are excellent inventions for public inſtitutions, and as occaſional reſources; but if they were once univerſally adopted by the poor, it would be impoſſible to prevent the price of labour from being regulated by them; and the labourer, though at firſt he might have more to ſpare for other expenſes, beſides food, would ultimately have much leſs to ſpare than before.

The deſirable thing, with a view to the happineſs of the common people, ſeems to be, that their habitual food ſhould be dear, and their wages regulated by it; but that, in a ſcarcity, or other occaſional diſtreſs, the cheaper food ſhould be readily and cheerfully adopted.[a] With a view of rendering this tranſition eaſier, and at the ſame time of making a uſeful diſtinction between thoſe who are dependent on pariſh relief, and thoſe who are not, I ſhould think that one plan, which Mr. Young propoſes, would be

[a] It is certainly to be wiſhed, that every cottage in England ſhould have a garden to it, well ſtocked with vegetables. A little variety of food is in every point of view highly uſeful. Potatoes are undoubtedly a moſt valuable aſſiſtance, though I ſhould be very ſorry ever to ſee them the principal dependence of our labourers.

extremely

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extremely eligible. This is " to paſs an act " prohibiting relief, ſo far as ſubſiſtence is con- " cerned, in any other manner than by pota- " toes, rice, and ſoup; not merely as a meaſure " of the moment, but permanently.[a]" I do not think, that this plan would neceſſarily introduce theſe articles as the common food of the lower claſſes; and if it merely made the tranſition to them in periods of diſtreſs eaſier, and at the ſame time drew a more marked line than at preſent between dependence and independence, it would have a very beneficial effect.

As it is acknowledged, that the introduction of milk and potatoes, or of cheap ſoups, as the general food of the lower claſſes of people, would lower the price of labour, perhaps ſome cold politician might propoſe to adopt the ſyſtem, with a view of underſelling foreigners in the markets of Europe. I ſhould not envy the feelings, which could ſuggeſt ſuch a propoſal. I really cannot conceive any thing much more deteſtable, than the idea of knowingly condemning the labourers of this country to the rags and

[a] Queſtion of Scarcity, &c. p. 80. This might be done, at leaſt with regard to workhouſes. In aſſiſting the poor at their own homes, it might be ſubject to ſome practical difficulties.

wretched

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wretched cabins of Ireland, for the purpose of selling a few more broad cloths and calicoes.[a] The

[a] In this observation I have not the least idea of alluding to Mr. Young, who, I firmly believe, ardently wishes to meliorate the condition of the lower classes of people; though I do not think, that his plan would effect the object in view. He either did not see those consequences, which I apprehended from it; or he has a better opinion of the happiness of the common people in Ireland than I have. In his Irish tour he seemed much struck with the plenty of potatoes which they possessed, and the absence of all apprehension of want. Had he travelled in 1800 and 1801, his impressions would by all accounts have been very different. From the facility which has hitherto prevailed in Ireland of procuring potato grounds, scarcities have certainly been rare, and all the effects of the system have not yet been felt, though certainly enough to make it appear very far from desirable.

Mr. Young has since pursued his idea more in detail, in a pamphlet entitled, *An Inquiry into the Propriety of applying Wastes to the better Maintenance and Support of the Poor.* But the impression on my mind is still the same; and it appears to be calculated, to assimilate the condition of the labourers of this country to that of the lower classes of the Irish. Mr. Young seems, in a most unaccountable manner, to have forgotten all his general principles on this subject. He has treated the question of a provision for the poor, as if it was merely, How to provide in the cheapest and best manner for a *given number* of people. If this had been the sole question, it would never have taken so many hundred years to resolve. But the real question is, How to provide for those who are in want, in such a manner, as to prevent a continual

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The wealth and power of nations are, after all, only desirable as they contribute to happiness. In this point of view, I should be very far from undervaluing them, considering them, in general, as absolutely necessary means to attain the end; but if any particular case should occur, in which they appeared to be in direct opposition to each other, we cannot rationally doubt which ought to be postponed.

Fortunately, however, even on the narrowest political principles, the adoption of such a system would not answer. It has always been observed, that those, who work chiefly on their own property, work very indolently and unwillingly when employed for others; and it must necessarily happen, when, from the general adoption of a very cheap food, the population of a country increases considerably beyond the demand for labour, that habits of idleness and turbulence will be generated, most peculiarly unfavourable to a flourishing state of manu-

accumulation of their numbers? and it will readily occur to the reader, that a plan of giving them land and cows cannot promise much success in this respect. If, after all the commons had been divided, the poor laws were still to continue in force, no good reason can be assigned, why the rates should not in a few years be as high as they are at present, independently of all that had been expended in the purchase of land and stock.

factures.

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factures. In ſpite of the cheapneſs of labour in Ireland, there are few manufactures, which can be prepared in that country for foreign ſale ſo cheap as in England: and this is in great meaſure owing to the want of thoſe induſtrious habits, which can only be produced by regular employment.

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CHAP. XI.

Of the neceſſity of general principles on this ſubject.

It has been obſerved by Hume, that of all ſciences there is none where firſt appearances are more deceitful than in politics.* The remark is undoubtedly very juſt, and is moſt peculiarly applicable to that department of the ſcience, which relates to the modes of improving the condition of the lower claſſes of ſociety.

We are continually hearing declamations againſt theory and theoriſts, by men who pride themſelves upon the diſtinction of being practical. It muſt be acknowledged, that bad theories are very bad things, and the authors of them uſeleſs, and ſometimes pernicious members of ſociety. But theſe advocates of practice do not ſeem to be aware, that they themſelves very often come under this deſcription, and that a great part of them may be claſſed among the moſt miſchievous theoriſts of their time. When a man faithfully relates any facts, which have come

* Eſſay xi, vol. i, p. 431. 8vo.

within

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within the ſcope of his own obſervation, however confined it may have been, he undoubtedly adds to the ſum of general knowledge, and confers a benefit on ſociety. But when from this confined experience, from the management of his own little farm, or the details of the workhouſe in his neighbourhood, he draws a general inference, as is very frequently the caſe, he then at once erects himſelf into a theoriſt: and is the more dangerous, becauſe, experience being the only juſt foundation for theory, people are often caught merely by the ſound of the word, and do not ſtop to make the diſtinction between that partial experience, which, on ſuch ſubjects, is no foundation whatever for a juſt theory, and that general experience, on which alone a juſt theory can be founded.

There are perhaps few ſubjects on which human ingenuity has been more exerted, than the endeavour to meliorate the condition of the poor; and there is certainly no ſubject in which it has ſo completely failed. The queſtion between the theoriſt who calls himſelf practical, and the genuine theoriſt is, whether this ſhould prompt us to look into all the holes and corners of workhouſes, and content ourſelves with mulcting the pariſh officers for their waſte of

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cheeſe parings and candle ends, and with diſtributing more ſoups and potatoes; or to recur to general principles, which ſhow us at once the cauſe of the failure, and prove that the ſyſtem has been from the beginning radically erroneous. There is no ſubject to which general principles have been ſo ſeldom applied; and yet in the whole compaſs of human knowledge I doubt if there be one, in which it is ſo dangerous to loſe ſight of them; becauſe the partial and immediate effect of a particular mode of giving aſſiſtance are ſo often directly oppoſite to the general and permanent effects.

It has been obſerved in particular diſtricts, where cottagers are poſſeſſed of ſmall pieces of land, and are in the habit of keeping cows, that during the late ſcarcities ſome of them were able to ſupport themſelves without pariſh aſſiſtance, and others with comparatively little.[a]

According to the partial view in which this ſubject has been always contemplated, a general inference has been drawn from ſuch inſtances, that, if we could place all our labourers in a ſimilar ſituation, they would all be equally com-

[a] See an inquiry into the State of Cottagers in the Counties of Lincoln and Rutland by Robert Gourlay. Annals of Agriculture, vol. xxxvii, p. 514.

fortable,

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an enviable ſituation, and ſuch as we might naturally wiſh was the lot of all our labourers. But it is perfectly clear, that ſuch a ſyſtem could not, in the nature of things, poſſeſs the ſame advantages, if it were made general; becauſe there would then be no countries, to which the children could emigrate with the ſame proſpect of finding work. Population would evidently increaſe beyond the demand of towns and manufactories, and the price of labour would univerſally fall.

It ſhould be obſerved alſo, that one of the reaſons, why the labourers who at preſent keep cows are ſo comfortable, is, that they are able to make conſiderable profit of the milk which they do not uſe themſelves; an advantage which would evidently be very much diminiſhed, if the ſyſtem were univerſal. And though they were certainly able to ſtruggle through the late ſcarcities with leſs aſſiſtance than their neighbours, as might naturally be expected, from their having other reſources beſides the article which in thoſe individual years was ſcarce; yet if the ſyſtem were univerſal, there can be no reaſon aſſigned, why they would not be ſubject to ſuffer as much from a ſcarcity of graſs and a mortality

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mortality among cows,[a] as our common labourers do now from a ſcarcity of wheat. We ſhould be extremely cautious therefore of truſting to ſuch appearances, and of drawing a general inference from this kind of partial experience.

The main principle, on which the ſociety for increaſing the comforts and bettering the condition of the poor profeſſes to proceed, is excellent. To give effect to that maſterſpring of induſtry, the deſire of bettering our condition,[b] is the true mode of improving the ſtate of the lower claſſes; and we may ſafely agree with Mr. Bernard, in one of his able prefaces, that whatever encourages and promotes habits of induſtry, prudence, foreſight, virtue, and cleanlineſs, among the poor, is beneficial to them and to the country; and whatever removes or diminiſhes the incitements to any of theſe qualities is de-

[a] At preſent the loſs of a cow, which muſt now and then happen, is generally remedied by a petition and ſubſcription; and as the event is conſidered as a moſt ſerious misfortune to a labourer, theſe petitions are for the moſt part attended to; but if the cow ſyſtem were univerſal, loſſes would occur ſo frequently, that they could not poſſibly be repaired in the ſame way, and families would be continually dropping from comparative plenty into want.

[b] Preface to vol. ii, of the Reports.

trimental

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fortable, and equally independent of the parish. This is an inference, however, that by no means follows. The advantage, which cottagers who at present keep cows enjoy, arises in a great measure from its being peculiar, and would be considerably diminished, if it were made general.

A farmer or gentleman has, we will suppose, a certain number of cottages on his farm. Being a liberal man, and liking to see all the people about him comfortable, he may join a piece of land to his cottage sufficient to keep one or two cows, and give besides high wages. His labourers will of course live in plenty, and be able to rear up large families; but his farm may not require many hands; and though he may choose to pay those that he employs well, he will not probably wish to have more labourers on his land than his work requires. He does not therefore build more houses; and the children of the labourers whom he employs must evidently emigrate, and settle in other countries. While such a system continues peculiar to certain families, or certain districts, the emigrants would easily be able to find work in other places; and it cannot be doubted, that the individual labourers employed on these farms are in

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trimental to the ſtate, and pernicious to the individual.[a]

Mr. Bernard indeed himſelf ſeems in general to be fully aware of the difficulties, which the ſociety has to contend with in the accompliſhment of its object. But ſtill it appears to be in ſome danger of falling into the error before alluded to, of drawing general inferences from inſufficient experience. Without adverting to the plans reſpecting cheaper foods and pariſh ſhops, recommended by individuals, the beneficial effects of which depend entirely upon their being peculiar to certain families or certain pariſhes, and would be loſt if they were general, by lowering the wages of labour; I ſhall only notice one obſervation of a more comprehenſive nature, which occurs in the preface to the ſecond volume of the Reports. It is there remarked, that the experience of the ſociety ſeemed to warrant the concluſion, that the beſt mode of relieving the poor was, by aſſiſting them at their own homes, and placing out their children as ſoon as poſſible in different employments, apprenticeſhips, &c. I really believe, that this is the beſt, and it is certainly the moſt agreeable mode, in which occaſional and diſcri-

[a] Preface to vol. iii of the Reports.

minate

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minate assistance can be given. But it is evident, that it must be done with caution, and cannot be adopted as a general principle, and made the foundation of universal practice. It is open exactly to the same objection as the cow system, which has just been noticed, and that part of the act of the 43d of Elizabeth, which directs the overseers to employ and provide for the children of the poor. A particular parish, where all the children, as soon as they were of a proper age, were taken from their parents and placed out in proper situations, might be very comfortable; but if the system were general, and the poor saw, that all their children would be thus provided for, every employment would presently be overstocked with hands, and the consequences need not be again repeated.

Nothing can be more clear, than that it is within the power of money, and of the exertions of the rich, adequately to relieve a particular family, a particular parish, and even a particular district. But it will be equally clear, if we reflect a moment on the subject, that it is totally out of their power, to relieve the whole country in the same way; at least without providing a regular vent for the overflowing numbers in emigration, or without the prevalence of a particular virtue among

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among the poor, which the diſtribution of this aſſiſtance tends obviouſly to diſcourage.

Even induſtry itſelf is, in this reſpect, not very different from money. A man who poſſeſſes a certain portion of it, above what is uſually poſſeſſed by his neighbours, will, in the actual ſtate of things, be almoſt ſure of a competent livelihood; but if all his neighbours were to become at once as induſtrious as himſelf, the abſolute portion of induſtry which he before poſſeſſed would no longer be a ſecurity againſt want. Hume fell into a very great error, when he aſſerted, that "almoſt all the moral as well "as natural evils of human life ariſe from idle-"neſs;" and for the cure of theſe ills required only, that the whole ſpecies ſhould poſſeſs naturally an equal diligence with that, which many individuals are able to attain by habit and reflection.[a] It is evident, that this given degree of induſtry poſſeſſed by the whole ſpecies, if not combined with another virtue of which he takes no notice, would totally fail of reſcuing ſociety from want and miſery, and would ſcarcely remove a ſingle moral or phyſical evil of all thoſe to which he alludes.

I am aware of an objection, which will, with

[a] Dialogues on Natural Religion, Part xi, p. 212.

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great appearance of justice, be urged against the general scope of these reasonings. It will be said, that to argue thus, is at once to object to every mode of assisting the poor, as it is impossible, in the nature of things, to assist people individually, without altering their relative situation in society, and proportionally depressing others; and that as those who have families are the persons naturally most subject to distress, and as we are certainly not called upon to assist those who do not want our aid, we must necessarily, if we act at all, relieve those who have children, and thus encourage marriage and population.

I have already observed however, and I here repeat it again, that the general principles on these subjects ought not to be pushed too far, though they should always be kept in view; and that many cases may occur, in which the good resulting from the relief of the present distress may more than overbalance the evil to be apprehended from the remote consequence.

All relief in instances of distress, not arising from idle and improvident habits, clearly comes under this description; and in general it may be observed, that it is only that kind of *systematic* and *certain* relief, on which the poor can confidently

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confidently depend, whatever may be their conduct, that violates general principles in ſuch a manner as to make it clear, that the general conſequence is worſe than the particular evil.

Independently of this diſcriminate and occaſional aſſiſtance, the beneficial effects of which I have fully allowed in a preceding chapter, I have before endeavoured to ſhow, that much might be expected from a better and more general ſyſtem of education. Every thing that can be done in this way has indeed a very peculiar value; becauſe education is one of thoſe advantages, which not only all may ſhare without interfering with each other, but the raiſing of one perſon may actually contribute to the raiſing of others. If, for inſtance, a man by education acquires that decent kind of pride, and thoſe juſter habits of thinking, which will prevent him from burdening ſociety with a family of children which he cannot ſupport, his conduct, as far as an individual inſtance can go, tends evidently to improve the condition of his fellow labourers; and a contrary conduct from ignorance would tend as evidently to depreſs it.

I cannot help thinking alſo, that ſomething might be done towards bettering the ſituation of the poor by a general improvement of their cottages,

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cottages, if care were taken, at the ſame time, not to make them ſo large as to allow of two families ſettling in them; and not to increaſe their number faſter than the demand for labour required. One of the moſt ſalutary and leaſt pernicious checks to the frequency of early marriages in this country is the difficulty of procuring a cottage, and the laudable habits, which prompt a labourer rather to defer his marriage ſome years in the expectation of a vacancy, than to content himſelf with a wretched mud cabin, like thoſe in Ireland.[a]

Even the cow ſyſtem, upon a more confined plan, might not be open to objection. With any view of making it a ſubſtitute for the Poor Laws, and of giving labourers a right to demand land and cows in proportion to their families; or of taking the common people from the conſumption of wheat, and feeding them

[a] Perhaps, however, this is not often left to his choice, on account of the fear which every pariſh has of increaſing its poor. There are many ways by which our poor laws operate in counteracting their firſt obvious tendency to increaſe population, and this is one of them. I have little doubt, that it is almoſt excluſively owing to theſe counteracting cauſes, that we have been able to perſevere in this ſyſtem ſo long, and that the condition of the poor has not been ſo much injured by it, as might have been expected.

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on milk and potatoes, it appears to me, I confeſs, truly prepoſterous: but if it were ſo ordered, as merely to provide a comfortable ſituation for the better and more induſtrious claſs of labourers, and to ſupply at the ſame time a very important want among the poor in general, that of milk for their children; I think that it would be extremely beneficial, and might be made a very powerful incitement to habits of induſtry, ecomony, and prudence. With this view however, it is evident, that only a certain portion of labourers in each pariſh could be embraced in the plan; that good conduct, and not mere diſtreſs, ſhould have the moſt valid claim to preference; that too much attention ſhould not be paid to the number of children; and that univerſally, thoſe who had ſaved money enough for the purchaſe of a cow, ſhould be preferred, to thoſe who required to be furniſhed with one by the pariſh.[a]

[a] The act of Elizabeth, which prohibited the building of cottages, unleſs four acres of land were annexed to them, is probably impracticable in a manufacturing country like England; but upon this principle, certainly the greateſt part of the poor might poſſeſs land; becauſe the difficulty of procuring ſuch cottages would always operate as a powerful check to their increaſe. The effect of ſuch a plan would be very different from that of Mr. Young.

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To facilitate the saving of small sums of money for this purpose, and encourage young labourers to economize their earnings with a view to a provision for marriage, it might be extremely useful, to have country banks, where the smallest sums would be received, and a fair interest paid for them. At present, the few labourers that save a little money are often greatly at a loss to know what to do with it; and under such circumstances we cannot be much surprised, that it should sometimes be ill employed, and last but a short time. It would probably be essential to the success of any plan of this kind, that the labourer should be able to draw out his money whenever he wanted it, and have the most perfect liberty of disposing of it in every respect as he pleased. Though we may regret, that money so hardly earned should sometimes be spent to little purpose; yet it seems to be a case, in which we have no right to interfere; nor, if we had, would it in a general view be advantageous; because the knowledge of possessing this liberty would be of more use in encouraging the practice of saving, than any restriction of it in preventing the misuse of money so saved.

One should undoubtedly be extremely unwil-

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ling, not to make as much uſe as poſſible of that known ſtimulus to induſtry and economy, the deſire of, and the attachment to property: but it ſhould be recollected, that the good effects of this ſtimulus ſhow themſelves principally when this property is to be procured, or preſerved, by perſonal exertions; and that they are by no means ſo general under other circumſtances. If any idle man with a family could demand and obtain a cow and ſome land, I ſhould expect to ſee both very often neglected.

It has been obſerved, that thoſe cottagers, who keep cows, are more induſtrious and more regular in their conduct, than thoſe who do not. This is probably true, and what might naturally be expected; but the inference, that the way to make all people induſtrious is to give them cows, may by no means be quite ſo certain. Moſt of thoſe who keep cows at preſent have purchaſed them with the fruits of their own induſtry. It is therefore more juſt to ſay, that their induſtry has given them a cow, than that a cow has given them their induſtry; though I would by no means be underſtood to imply, that the ſudden poſſeſſion of property never generates induſtrious habits.

The practical good effects, which have been already

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already experienced from cottagers keeping cows,[a] ariſe in fact from the ſyſtem being nearly ſuch as the confined plan which I have mentioned. In the diſtricts where cottagers of this deſcription moſt abound, they do not bear a very large proportion to the population of the whole pariſh; they conſiſt in general of the better ſort of labourers, who have been able to purchaſe their own cows; and the peculiar comforts of their ſituation ariſe more from the relative, than the poſitive advantages which they poſſeſs.

From obſerving therefore their induſtry and comforts, we ſhould be very cautious of inferring, that we could give the ſame induſtry and comforts to all the lower claſſes of people, by giving them the ſame poſſeſſions. There is nothing, that has given riſe to ſuch a cloud of errors, as a confuſion between relative and poſitive, and between cauſe and effect.

It may be ſaid however, that any plan of generally improving the cottages of the poor, or of enabling more of them to keep cows, would evidently give them the power of rearing a

[a] Inquiry into the State of Cottagers in the Counties of Lincoln and Rutland, by Robert Gourlay. Annals of Agriculture, vol. xxxvii, p. 514.

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greater number of children, and, by thus encouraging population, violate the principles which I have endeavoured to eſtabliſh. But if I have been ſucceſsful in making the reader comprehend the principal bent of this work, he will be aware, that the preciſe reaſon why I think that more children ought not to be born than the country can ſupport is, that the greateſt poſſible number of thoſe that are born may be ſupported. We cannot, in the nature of things, aſſiſt the poor in any way, without enabling them to rear up to manhood a greater number of their children. But this is, of all other things, the most deſirable, both with regard to individuals and the public. Every loſs of a child from the conſequences of poverty muſt evidently be preceded and accompanied by great miſery to individuals; and in a public view every child, that dies under ten years of age, is a loſs to the nation of all that had been expended in its ſubſiſtence till that period. Conſequently, in every point of view, a decreaſe of mortality at all ages is what we ought to aim at. We cannot however effect this object, without firſt crowding the population in ſome degree by making more children grow up to manhood; but we ſhall do no harm in this reſpect,

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ſpect, if, at the ſame time, we can impreſs theſe children with the idea, that, to poſſeſs the ſame advantages as their parents, they muſt defer marriage till they have a fair proſpect of being able to maintain a family. And it muſt be candidly confeſſed, that, if we cannot do this, all our former efforts will have been thrown away. It is not in the nature of things, that any permanent and general improvement in the condition of the poor can be effected without an increaſe in the preventive check; and unleſs this take place, either with or without our efforts, every thing that is done for the poor muſt be temporary and partial: a diminution of mortality at preſent will be balanced by an increaſed mortality in future; and the improvement of their condition in one place will proportionally depreſs it in another. This is a truth ſo important, and ſo little underſtood, that it can ſcarcely be too often inſiſted on.

Dr. Paley, in a chapter on population, proviſion, &c., in his Moral Philoſophy, obſerves, that the condition moſt favourable to the population of a country, and at the ſame time to its general happineſs is, "that of a laborious frugal "people miniſtering to the demands of an opu-

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"lent luxurious nation."[a] Such a form of ſociety has not, it muſt be confeſſed, an inviting aſpect. Nothing but the conviction of its being abſolutely neceſſary could reconcile us to the idea of ten millions of people condemned to inceſſant toil, and to the privation of every thing but abſolute neceſſaries, in order to miniſter to the exceſſive luxuries of the other million. But the fact is, that ſuch a form of ſociety is by no means neceſſary. It is by no means neceſſary, that the rich ſhould be exceſſively luxurious, in order to ſupport the manufactures of a country; or that the poor ſhould be deprived of all luxuries, in order to make them ſufficiently numerous. The beſt, and in every point of view the moſt advantageous manufactures in this country, are thoſe which are conſumed by the great body of the people. The manufactures which are

[a] Vol. ii, c. xi, p. 359. From a paſſage in Dr. Paley's late work on Natural Theology, I am inclined to think, that ſubſequent reflection has induced him to modify ſome of his former ideas on the ſubject of population. He has ſtated moſt juſtly (ch. xxv, p. 539), that mankind will in every country breed up to a certain point of diſtreſs. If this be allowed, that country will evidently be the happieſt, where the degree of diſtreſs at this point is the leaſt; and conſequently, if the ſpread of luxury, by producing the check ſooner, tend to diminiſh this degree of diſtreſs, it is certainly deſirable.

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confined exclusively to the rich are not only trivial, on account of the comparative smallness of their quantity; but are further liable to the great disadvantage of producing much occasional misery among those employed in them, from changes of fashion. It is the spread of luxury therefore among the mass of the people, and not an excess of it in a few, that seems to be most advantageous, both with regard to national wealth and national happiness; and what Dr. Paley considers as the true evil and proper danger of luxury, I should be disposed to consider as its true good and peculiar advantage. If indeed, it be allowed, that in every society, not in the state of a new colony, some powerful check to population must prevail; and if it be observed, that a taste for the comforts and conveniencies of life will prevent people from marrying, under the certainty of being deprived of these advantages; it must be allowed, that we can hardly expect to find any check to marriage so little prejudicial to the happiness and virtue of society as the general prevalence of such a taste; and consequently, that the spread of luxury[a] in this sense

[a] In a note to the tenth chapter of the last book, I have mentioned the point at which alone it is probable, that luxury

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ſenſe of the term is particularly deſirable, and one of the beſt means of raiſing that ſtandard of wretchedneſs alluded to in the eighth chapter of this book.

It has been generally found, that the middle parts of ſociety are moſt favourable to virtuous and induſtrious habits, and to the growth of all kinds of talents. But it is evident, that all cannot be in the middle. Superior and inferior parts are in the nature of things abſolutely neceſſary; and not only neceſſary, but ſtrikingly beneficial. If no man could hope to riſe, or fear to fall in ſociety; if induſtry did not bring with it its reward, and indolence its puniſhment; we could not expect to ſee that animated activity in bettering our condition, which now forms the maſter-ſpring of public proſperity. But in contemplating the different ſtates of Europe, we obſerve a very conſiderable difference in the relative proportions of the ſuperior, the middle, and the inferior parts; and from the effect of theſe differences it ſeems probable, that

becomes really prejudicial to a country. But this point does not depend upon the ſpread of luxury, as diminiſhing the frequency of marriage among the poor, but upon the proportion which thoſe employed in preparing or procuring luxuries bear to the funds which are to ſupport them.

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our beſt grounded expectations of an increaſe in the happineſs of the maſs of human ſociety are founded in the proſpect of an increaſe in the relative proportions of the middle parts. And if the lower claſſes of people had acquired the habit of proportioning the ſupplies of labour to a ſtationary or even decreaſing demand, without an increaſe of miſery and mortality, as at preſent, we might even venture to indulge a hope, that at ſome future period the proceſſes for abridging human labour, the progreſs of which has of late years been ſo rapid, might ultimately ſupply all the wants of the moſt wealthy ſociety with leſs perſonal labour than at preſent; and if they did not diminiſh the ſeverity of individual exertion, might, at leaſt, diminiſh the number of thoſe employed in ſevere toil. If the loweſt claſſes of ſociety were thus diminiſhed, and the middle claſſes increaſed, each labourer might indulge a more rational hope of riſing by diligence and exertion into a better ſtation; the rewards of induſtry and virtue would be increaſed in number; the lottery of human ſociety would appear to conſiſt of fewer blanks and more prizes; and the ſum of ſocial happineſs would be evidently augmented.

To indulge however in any diſtant views of this

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this kind, unaccompanied by the evils uſually attendant on a ſtationary or decreaſing demand for labour, we muſt ſuppoſe the general prevalence of ſuch prudential habits among the poor, as would prevent them from marrying, when the actual price of labour, joined to what they might have ſaved in their ſingle ſtate, would not give them the proſpect of being able to ſupport a wife and five or ſix children without aſſiſtance. And undoubtedly ſuch a degree of prudential reſtraint would produce a very ſtriking melioration in the condition of the lower claſſes of people.

It may be ſaid perhaps, that even this degree of prudence might not always avail, as when a man marries he cannot tell what number of children he ſhall have, and many have more than ſix. This is certainly true; and in this caſe I do not think, that any evil would reſult from making a certain allowance to every child above this number; not with a view of rewarding a man for his large family, but merely of relieving him from a ſpecies of diſtreſs, which it would be unreaſonable in us to expect that he ſhould calculate upon. And with this view, the relief ſhould be merely ſuch as to place him exactly in the ſame ſituation, as if he had had ſix children.

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children. Monteſquieu diſapproves of an edict of Lewis the Fourteenth, which gave certain penſions to thoſe who had ten and twelve children, as being of no uſe in encouraging population.[a] For the very reaſon that he diſapproves of it, I ſhould think, that ſome law of the kind might be adopted without danger, and might relieve particular individuals from a very preſſing and unlooked for diſtreſs, without operating in any reſpect as an encouragement to marriage.

If at ſome future period any approach ſhould be made towards the more general prevalence of prudential habits with reſpect to marriage among the poor, from which alone any permanent and general improvement of their condition can ariſe; I do not think, that the narroweſt politician need be alarmed at it, from the fear of its occaſioning ſuch an advance in the price of labour, as will enable our commercial competitors to underſell us in foreign markets. There are four circumſtances that might be expected to accompany it, which would probably either prevent, or fully counterbalance any effect of this kind. Theſe are, 1ſt, The more equable and lower price of proviſions, from the demand being leſs frequently above the ſupply. 2dly,

[a] Eſprit des Loix, liv. xxiii, c. xxvii.

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The removal of that heavy burden on agriculture, and that great addition to the preſent wages of labour, the poors rates. 3dly, The national ſaving of a great part of that ſum, which is expended without return in the ſupport of thoſe children, who die prematurely from the conſequences of poverty. And, laſtly, The more general prevalence of economical and induſtrious habits, particularly among unmarried men, which would prevent that indolence, drunkenneſs, and waſte of labour, which at preſent are too frequently a conſequence of high wages.

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CHAP. XII.

Of our rational expectations respecting the future improvement of Society.

In taking a general and concluding view of our rational expectations respecting the mitigation of the evils arising from the principle of population, it may be observed, that though the increase of population in a geometrical ratio be incontrovertible, and the period of doubling, when unchecked, has been uniformly stated in this work rather below than above the truth; yet there are some natural consequences of the progress of society and civilization, which necessarily repress its full effects. These are, more particularly, great towns and manufactures, in which we can scarcely hope, and certainly not expect to see any very material change. It is undoubtedly our duty, and in every point of view highly desirable, to make towns and manufacturing employments as little injurious as possible to the duration of human life; but, after all our efforts, it is probable, that they will always

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always remain leſs healthy than country ſituations and country employments; and conſequently, operating as poſitive checks, will diminiſh in ſome degree the neceſſity of the preventive check.

In every old ſtate it is obſerved, that a conſiderable number of grown-up people remain for a time unmarried. The duty of practiſing the common and acknowledged rules of morality during this period has never been controverted in theory, however it may have been oppoſed in practice. This branch of the duty of moral reſtraint has ſcarcely been touched by the reaſonings of this work. It reſts on the ſame foundation as before, neither ſtronger nor weaker. And knowing how incompletely this duty has hitherto been fulfilled, it would certainly be viſionary, to expect any very material change for the better in future.

The part which has been affected by the reaſonings of this work is not therefore that, which relates to our conduct during the period of celibacy, but to the duty of extending this period till we have a proſpect of being able to maintain our children. And it is by no means viſionary to indulge a hope of ſome favourable change in this reſpect; becauſe it is found by experience,

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experience, that the prevalence of this kind of prudential restraint is extremely different in different countries, and in the same countries at different periods.

It cannot be doubted, that throughout Europe in general, and most particularly in the northern states, a decided change has taken place in the operation of this prudential restraint, since the prevalence of those warlike and enterprising habits, which destroyed so many people. In later times the gradual diminution and almost total extinction of the plagues, which so frequently visited Europe in the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries, produced a change of the same kind. And in this country it is not to be doubted, that the proportion of marriages has become smaller, since the improvement of our towns, the less frequent returns of epidemics, and the adoption of habits of greater cleanliness. During the late scarcities it appears, that the number of marriages diminished; and the same motives, which prevented many people from marrying during such a period, would operate precisely in the same way, if, in future, the additional number of children reared to manhood, from the introduction of the cow-pox, were to be such as to crowd

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crowd all employments, lower the price of labour, and make it more difficult to ſupport a family.

Univerſally, the practice of mankind on the ſubject of marriage has been much ſuperior to their theories; and however frequent may have been the declamations on the duty of entering into this ſtate, and the advantage of early unions to prevent vice, each individual has practically found it neceſſary, to conſider of the means of ſupporting a family before he ventured to take ſo important a ſtep. That great *vis medicatrix reipublicæ*, the deſire of bettering our condition, and the fear of making it worſe, has been conſtantly in action, and has been conſtantly directing people into the right road, in ſpite of all the declamations which tended to lead them aſide. Owing to this powerful ſpring of health in every ſtate, which is nothing more than an inference from the general courſe of the laws of nature irreſiſtibly forced on each man's attention, the prudential check to marriage has increaſed in Europe; and it cannot be unreaſonable to conclude, that it will ſtill make further advances. If this take place, without any marked and decided increaſe of a vicious intercourſe

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tercourſe with the ſex, the happineſs of ſociety will evidently be promoted by it; and with regard to the danger of ſuch increaſe, it is conſolatory to remark, that thoſe countries in Europe, where marriages are the leaſt frequent, are by no means particularly diſtinguiſhed by vices of this kind. It has appeared, that Norway, Switzerland, England, and Scotland, are above all the reſt in the prevalence of the preventive check; and though I do not mean to inſiſt particularly on the virtuous habits of theſe countries, yet I think, that no perſon would ſelect them as the countries moſt marked for profligacy of manners. Indeed, from the little that I know of the continent, I ſhould have been inclined to ſelect them as moſt diſtinguiſhed for contrary habits, and as rather above than below their neighbours in the chaſtity of their women, and conſequently in the virtuous habits of their men. Experience therefore ſeems to teach us, that it is poſſible for moral and phyſical cauſes to counteract the effects, that might at firſt be expected from an increaſe of the check to marriage; but allowing all the weight to theſe effects, which is in any degree probable, it may be ſafely aſſerted, that the diminution of the vices

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arising from indigence would fully counterbalance them; and that all the advantages of diminished mortality, and superior comforts, which would certainly result from an increase of the preventive check, may be placed entirely on the side of the gains to the cause of happiness and virtue.

It is less the object of the present work to propose new plans of improving society, than to inculcate the necessity of resting contented with that mode of improvement, which is dictated by the course of nature, and of not obstructing the advances, which would otherwise be made in this way.

It would be undoubtedly highly advantageous, that all our positive institutions, and the whole tenour of our conduct to the poor, should be such as actively to cooperate with that lesson of prudence inculcated by the common course of human events; and if we take upon ourselves sometimes to mitigate the natural punishments of imprudence, that we could balance it by increasing the rewards of an opposite conduct. But much would be done, if merely the institutions which directly tend to encourage marriage were gradually changed, and we ceased to circulate

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culate opinions and inculcate doctrines, which positively counteract the lessons of nature.

The limited good, which it is sometimes in our power to effect, is often lost by attempting too much, and by making the adoption of some particular plan essentially necessary even to a partial degree of success. In the practical application of the reasonings of this work, I hope that I have avoided this error. I wish to press on the recollection of the reader, that, though I may have given some new views of old facts, and may have indulged in the contemplation of a considerable degree of *possible* improvement, that I might not absolutely shut out that prime cheerer hope; yet in my expectations of probable improvement, and in suggesting the means of accomplishing it, I have been very cautious. The gradual abolition of the poor laws has already often been proposed, in consequence of the practical evils, which have been found to flow from them, and the danger of their becoming a weight absolutely intolerable on the landed property of the kingdom. The establishment of a more extensive system of national education has neither the advantage of novelty with some, nor its disadvantages with others,

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to recommend it. The practical good effects of education have long been experienced in Scotland; and almoſt every perſon who has been placed in a ſituation to judge, has given his teſtimony, that education appears to have a conſiderable effect in the prevention of crimes,[a] and the promotion of induſtry, morality, and regular conduct. Yet theſe are the only plans which have been offered; and though the adoption of them in the modes ſuggeſted would very powerfully contribute to forward the object of this work, and better the condition of the poor; yet if nothing be done in this way, I ſhall not abſolutely deſpair of ſome partial good effects from the general tenour of the reaſoning.

If the principles which I have endeavoured to eſtabliſh be falſe, I moſt ſincerely hope to ſee

[a] Mr. Howard found fewer priſoners in Switzerland and Scotland, than other countries, which he attributed to a more regular education among the lower claſſes of the Swiſs and the Scotch. During the number of years which the late Mr. Fielding preſided at Bow-ſtreet, only ſix Scotchmen were brought before him. He uſed to ſay, that of the perſons committed the greater part were Iriſh. Preface to vol. iii of the Reports of the Society for bettering the condition of the poor, p. 32.

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them completely refuted; but if they be true, the subject is so important, and interests the question of human happiness so nearly, that it is impossible that they should not in time be more fully known, and more generally circulated, whether any particular efforts be made for the purpose or not.

Among the higher and middle classes of society, the effect of this knowledge would, I hope, be to direct without relaxing their efforts in bettering the condition of the poor; to show them what they can, and what they cannot do; and that, although much may be done by advice and instruction, by encouraging habits of prudence and cleanliness, by discriminate charity, and by any mode of bettering the present condition of the poor, which is followed by an increase of the preventive check; yet that, without this last effect, all the former efforts would be futile; and that, in any old and well-peopled state, to assist the poor in such a manner as to enable them to marry as early as they please, and rear up large families, is a physical impossibility. This knowledge, by tending to prevent the rich from destroying the good effects of their own exertions, and wasting their efforts in a direction where success is unattainable, would confine their

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attention to the proper objects, and thus enable them to do more good.

Among the poor themſelves, its effects would be ſtill more important. That the principal and moſt permanent cauſe of poverty has little or no direct relation to forms of government, or the unequal diviſion of property; and that, as the rich do not in reality poſſeſs the power of finding employment and maintenance for the poor, the poor cannnot, in the nature of things, poſſeſs the right to demand them; are important truths flowing from the principle of population, which when properly explained would by no means be above the moſt ordinary comprehenſions. And it is evident, that every man in the lower claſſes of ſociety, who became acquainted with theſe truths, would be diſpoſed to bear the diſtreſſes, in which he might be involved, with more patience; would feel leſs diſcontent and irritation at the government, and the higher claſſes of ſociety, on account of his poverty; would be on all occaſions leſs diſpoſed to inſubordination and turbulence; and if he received aſſiſtance, either from any public inſtitution, or from the hand of private charity, he would receive it with more thankfulneſs, and more juſtly appreciate its value.

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If these truths were by degrees more generally known, which in the course of time does not seem to be improbable from the natural effects of the mutual interchange of opinions, the lower classes of people, as a body, would become more peaceable and orderly, would be less inclined to tumultuous proceedings in seasons of scarcity, and would at all times be less influenced by inflammatory and seditious publications, from knowing how little the price of labour and the means of supporting a family depend upon a revolution. The mere knowledge of these truths, even if they did not operate sufficiently to produce any marked change in the prudential habits of the poor with regard to marriage, would still have a most beneficial effect on their conduct in a political light; and undoubtedly one of the most valuable of these effects would be the power, that would result to the higher and middle classes of society, of gradually improving their governments,* without the apprehension of those revolutionary excesses, the fear of which, at present, threatens to deprive Europe

* I cannot believe, that the removal of all unjust grounds of discontent against constituted authorities would render the people torpid and indifferent to advantages, which are really

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Europe even of that degree of liberty, which ſhe had before experienced to be practicable, and the ſalutary effects of which ſhe had long enjoyed.

From a review of the ſtate of ſociety in former periods, compared with the preſent, I ſhould certainly ſay, that the evils reſulting from the principle of population have rather diminiſhed than increaſed, even under the diſadvange of an almoſt total ignorance of their real cauſe. And if we can indulge the hope, that this ignorance will be gradually diſſipated, it does not ſeem unreaſonable to expect, that they will be ſtill further diminiſhed. The increaſe of abſolute population, which will of courſe take place, will evidently tend but little to weaken this expectation, as every thing depends upon the relative proportions between population and food, and not on the abſolute number of people. In the former part of this

attainable. The bleſſings of civil liberty are ſo great, that they ſurely cannot need the aid of falſe colouring to make them deſirable. I ſhould be ſorry to think, that the lower claſſes of people could never be animated to aſſert their rights but by means of ſuch illuſory promiſes, as will generally make the remedy of reſiſtance much worſe than the diſeaſe, that it was intended to cure.

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work it appeared, that the countries, which poſſeſſed the feweſt people, often ſuffered the moſt from the effects of the principle of population; and it can ſcarcely be doubted, that, taking Europe throughout, fewer famines and fewer diſeaſes ariſing from want have prevailed in the laſt century, than thoſe which preceded it.

On the whole therefore, though our future proſpects reſpecting the mitigation of the evils ariſing from the principle of population may not be ſo bright as we could wiſh, yet they are far from being entirely diſheartening, and by no means preclude that gradual and progreſſive improvement in human ſociety, which, before the late wild ſpeculations on this ſubject, was the object of rational expectation. To the laws of property and marriage, and to the apparently narrow principle of ſelf-love, which prompts each individual to exert himſelf in bettering his condition, we are indebted for all the nobleſt exertions of human genius, for every thing that diſtinguiſhes the civilized from the ſavage ſtate. A ſtrict inquiry into the principle of population obliges us to conclude, that we ſhall never be able to throw down the ladder, by which we have riſen to this eminence; but it by no means proves, that we may not riſe higher by the ſame means.

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means. The ſtructure of ſociety, in its great features, will probably always remain unchanged. We have every reaſon to believe, that it will always conſiſt of a claſs of proprietors, and a claſs of labourers; but the condition of each, and the proportion which they bear to each other, may be ſo altered, as greatly to improve the harmony and beauty of the whole. It would indeed be a melancholy reflection, that while the views of phyſical ſcience are daily enlarging, ſo as ſcarcely to be bounded by the moſt diſtant horizon, the ſcience of moral and political philoſophy ſhould be confined within ſuch narrow limits, or at beſt be ſo feeble in its influence, as to be unable to counteract the obſtacles to human happineſs ariſing from a ſingle cauſe. But however formidable theſe obſtacles may have appeared in ſome parts of this work, it is hoped, that the general reſult of the inquiry is ſuch, as not to make us give up the improvement of human ſociety in deſpair. The partial good which ſeems to be attainable is worthy of all our exertions; is ſufficient to direct our efforts, and animate our proſpects. And although we cannot expect, that the virtue and happineſs of mankind will keep pace with the brilliant career of phyſical diſcovery, yet if we

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are not wanting to ourselves, we may confidently indulge the hope, that, to no unimportant extent, they will be influenced by its progress, and will partake in its success.

APPENDIX.

In the preface to the second edition of this Essay, I expressed a hope, that the detailed manner, in which I had treated the subject, and pursued it to its consequences, though it might open the door to many objections, and expose me to much severity of criticism, might be subservient to the important end of bringing a subject so nearly connected with the happiness of society into more general notice. Conformably to the same views I should always have felt willing to enter into the discussion of any serious objections, that were made to my principles or conclusions, to abandon those which appeared to be false, and to throw further lights, if I could, on those which appeared to be true. But though the work has excited a degree of public attention much greater than I could have presumed to expect, yet very little has been written to controvert it; and of that little, the greatest part is so full of illiberal declamation, and so entirely destitute of argument, as to be evidently beneath notice. What I have to say therefore at present will be directed rather more to the objections, which have been urged in conversation, than to those which have appeared in print.

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print. My object is to correct some of the misrepresentations, which have gone abroad respecting two or three of the most important points of the Essay; and I should feel greatly obliged to those, who have not had leisure to read the whole work, if they would cast their eyes over the few following pages, that they may not, from the partial and incorrect statements which they have heard, mistake the import of some of my opinions, and attribute to me others which I have never held.

The first grand objection that has been made to my principles is, that they contradict the original command of the Creator, to increase and multiply and replenish the earth. But those who have urged this objection have certainly either not read the work, or have directed their attention solely to a few detached passages, and have been unable to seize the bent and spirit of the whole. I am fully of opinion, that it is the duty of man, to obey this command of his Creator, nor is there in my recollection a single passage in the work, which, taken with the context, can, to any reader of intelligence, warrant the contrary inference.

Every express command given to man by his Creator is given in subordination to those great and uniform laws of nature, which he had previously established; and we are forbidden both by reason and religion to expect, that these laws will be changed in order to enable us to execute more readily

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readily any particular precept. It is undoubtedly true, that, if man were enabled miraculouſly to live without food, the earth would be very rapidly repleniſhed: but as we have not the ſlighteſt ground of hope, that ſuch a miracle will be worked for this purpoſe, it becomes our poſitive duty as reaſonable creatures, and with a view of executing the commands of our Creator, to inquire into the laws which he has eſtabliſhed for the multiplication of the ſpecies. And when we find not only from the ſpeculative contemplation of theſe laws, but from the far more powerful and imperious ſuggeſtions of our ſenſes, that man cannot live without food, it is a folly exactly of the ſame *kind* to attempt to obey the will of our Creator by increaſing population without reference to the means of its ſupport, as to attempt to obtain an abundant crop of corn by ſowing it on the way ſide and in hedges, where it cannot receive its proper nouriſhment. Which is it, I would aſk, that beſt ſeconds the benevolent intentions of the Creator in covering the earth with eſculent vegetables, he who with care and foreſight duly ploughs and prepares a piece of ground, and ſows no more ſeed than he expects will grow up to maturity, or he who ſcatters a profuſion of ſeed indifferently over the land, without reference to the ſoil on which it falls, or any previous preparation for its reception?

It is an utter miſconception of my argument to infer,

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infer, that I am an enemy to population. I am only an enemy to vice and misery, and consequently to that unfavourable proportion between population and food, which produces these evils. But this unfavourable proportion has no necessary connection with the quantity of absolute population, which a country may contain. On the contrary, it is more frequently found in countries which are very thinly peopled, than in those which are populous.

The bent of my argument on the subject of population may be illustrated by the instance of a pasture farm. If a young grazier were told to stock his land well, as on his stock would depend his profits, and the ultimate success of his undertaking, he would certainly have been told nothing, but what was strictly true. And he would have to accuse himself, not his advisers, if, in pursuance of these instructions, he were to push the breeding of his cattle, till they became lean and half-starved. His instructor, when he talked of the advantages of a large stock, meant undoubtedly stock in proper condition, and not such a stock, as though it might be numerically greater was in value much less. The expression of stocking a farm well does not refer to particular numbers, but merely to that proportion which is best adapted to the farm, whether it be a poor or a rich one, whether it will carry fifty head of cattle or five hundred. It is undoubtedly extremely desirable, that it should carry the greater

greater number, and every effort ſhould be made to effect this object; but ſurely that farmer could not be conſidered as an enemy to a large quantity of ſtock, who ſhould inſiſt upon the folly and impropriety of attempting to breed ſuch a quantity, before the land was put into a condition to bear it.

The arguments which I have uſed reſpecting the increaſe of population are exactly of the ſame nature as theſe juſt mentioned. I believe that it is the intention of the Creator, that the earth ſhould be repleniſhed;* but certainly with a healthy, virtuous, and happy population, not an unhealthy, vicious, and miſerable one. And if in endeavouring to obey the command to increaſe and multiply, we people it only with beings of this latter deſcription, and ſuffer accordingly, we have no right to impeach the juſtice of the command, but our irrational mode of executing it.

In the deſirableneſs of a great and efficient population, I do not differ from the warmeſt advocates of increaſe. I am perfectly ready to acknowledge with the writers of old, that it is not extent of territory, but extent of population, that meaſures the power of ſtates. It is only as to the mode of obtaining a vigorous and efficient population, that I differ from them; and in thus differing I conceive myſelf entirely borne out by experience, that great teſt of all human ſpeculations.

* This opinion I have expreſſed, pag. 491 of the 4to. edit. and p. 239, vol. ii, 8vo. edit.

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It appears from the undoubted teſtimony of regiſters, that a large proportion of marriages and births is by no means neceſſarily connected with a rapid increaſe of population, but is often found in countries where it is either ſtationary or increaſing very ſlowly. The population of ſuch countries is not only comparatively inefficient from the general poverty and miſery of the inhabitants, but invariably contains a much larger proportion of perſons in thoſe ſtages of life, in which they are unable to contribute their ſhare to the reſources or the defence of the ſtate.

This is moſt ſtrikingly illuſtrated in an inſtance which I have quoted from M. Muret, in a chapter on Switzerland, where it appeared, that in proportion to the ſame population, the Lyonois produced 10 births, the Pays de Vaud 11, and a particular pariſh in the Alps only 8; but that at the age of 20 theſe three very different numbers were all reduced to the ſame.[a] In the Lyonois nearly half of the population was under the age of puberty, in the Pays de Vaud one third, and in the pariſh of the Alps only one fourth. The inference from ſuch facts is unavoidable, and of the higheſt importance to ſociety.

The power of a country to increaſe its reſources, or defend its poſſeſſions, muſt depend principally upon its efficient population, upon that part of the

[a] Pag. 271, 4to. edit. and p. 399, vol. i, 8vo. edit.

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population which is of an age to be employed effectually in agriculture, commerce, or war; but it appears with an evidence little ſhort of demonſtration, that in a country, the reſources of which do not naturally call for a larger proportion of births, ſuch an increaſe, ſo far from tending to increaſe this efficient population, would tend materially to diminiſh it. It would undoubtedly at firſt increaſe the number of ſouls in proportion to the means of ſubſiſtence, and conſequently cruelly increaſe the preſſure of want; but the numbers of perſons riſing annually to the age of puberty might not be ſo great as before, a larger part of the produce would be diſtributed without return to children, who would never reach manhood; and the additional population, inſtead of giving additional ſtrength to the country, would eſſentially leſſen this ſtrength, and operate as a conſtant obſtacle to the creation of new reſources.

We are a little dazzled at preſent by the population and power of France, and it is known, that ſhe has always had a large proportion of births: but if any reliance can be placed on what are conſidered as the beſt authorities on this ſubject, it is quite certain, that the advantages which ſhe enjoys do not ariſe from any thing peculiar in the ſtructure of her population; but ſolely from the great abſolute quantity of it, derived from her immenſe extent of fertile territory.

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Necker, ſpeaking of the population of France, ſays, that it is ſo compoſed, that a million of individuals preſent neither the ſame force in war, nor the ſame capacity for labour, as an equal number in a country where the people are leſs oppreſſed and fewer die in infancy.[a] And the view which Arthur Young has given of the ſtate of the lower claſſes of the people at the time he travelled in France, which was juſt at the commencement of the revolution, leads directly to the ſame concluſion. According to the *Statiſtique générale et particuliere de la France* lately publiſhed, the proportion of the population under twenty is almoſt $\frac{9}{20}$; in England it it is probably not much more than $\frac{7}{20}$.[b] Conſequently

[a] Necker ſur les Finances, Tom. i, ch. ix, p. 263, 12mo.

[b] I do not mention these numbers here, as vouching in any degree for their accuracy, but merely for the ſake of illuſtrating the ſubject. Unfortunately there are no data reſpecting the claſſifications of the population of different countries according to age, on which any reliance can be placed with ſafety. I have reaſon to think, that thoſe which are given in the *Statiſtique Générale* were not taken from actual enumerations, and the proportion of the population under 20, mentioned in the text, for England, is entirely conjectural, and certainly too ſmall. Of this, however, we may be quite ſure, that when two countries, from the proportion of their births to deaths, increaſe nearly at the ſame rate, the one, in which the births and deaths bear the greateſt proportion to the whole population, will have the ſmalleſt comparative number of perſons above the age of puberty. That England and Scotland have, in every million of people which they contain, more individuals fit for labour, than France, the data we have are ſufficient to

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quently out of a population of ten millions England would have a million more of perſons above twenty than France, and would upon this ſuppoſition have at leaſt three or four hundred thouſand more males of a military age. If our population were of the ſame deſcription as that of France, it muſt be increaſed numerically by more than a million and a half, in order to enable us to produce from England and Wales the ſame number of perſons above the age of twenty as at preſent; and if we had only an increaſe of a million, our efficient ſtrength in agriculture, commerce, and war, would be in the moſt decided manner diminiſhed, while at the ſame time the diſtreſſes of the lower claſſes would be dread-

to determine; but in what degree this difference exiſts cannot be aſcertained, without better information than we at preſent poſſeſs. On account of the more rapid increaſe of population in England than in France before the revolution, England ought, *cæteris paribus*, to have had the largeſt proportion of births, yet in France the proportion was $\frac{1}{25}$ or $\frac{1}{26}$, and in England only $\frac{1}{28}$.

The proportion of perſons capable of bearing arms has been ſometimes calculated at one fourth, and ſometimes at one fifth, of the whole population of a country. The reader will be aware of the prodigious difference between the two eſtimates, ſuppoſing them to be applicable to two different countries. In the one caſe, a population of 20 millions would yield five millions of effective men; and in the other caſe, the ſame population would only yield 4 millions. We cannot ſurely doubt which of the two kinds of population would be of the moſt valuable deſcription both with regard to actual ſtrength, and the creation of freſh reſources. Probably, however, there are no two countries in Europe, in which the difference in this reſpect is ſo great as that between $\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{5}$.

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fully increaſed. Can any rational man ſay, that an additional population of this deſcription would be deſirable, either in a moral or political view? And yet this is the kind of population, which invariably reſults from direct encouragements to marriage, or from the want of perſonal reſpectability, which is occaſioned by ignorance and deſpotiſm.

It may perhaps be true, that France fills her armies with greater facility and leſs interruption to the uſual labours of her inhabitants than England; and it muſt be acknowledged, that poverty and want of employment are powerful aids to a recruiting ſerjeant; but it would not be a very humane project, to keep our people always in want, for the ſake of enliſting them cheaper; nor would it be a very politic project, to diminiſh our wealth and ſtrength with the ſame economical view. We cannot attain incompatible objects. If we poſſeſs the advantage of being able to keep nearly all our people conſtantly employed, either in agriculture or commerce, we cannot expect to retain the oppoſite advantage of their being always at leiſure, and willing to enliſt for a very ſmall ſum.[a] But we may reſt perfectly aſſured, that while we have the efficient population, we ſhall never want men to fill our armies, if we propoſe to them adequate motives.

[a] This ſubject is ſtrikingly illuſtrated in Lord Selkirk's lucid and maſterly obſervations on the preſent ſtate of the Highlands, and on the cauſes and probable conſequences of emigration, to which I can with confidence refer the reader.

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In many parts of the Eſſay I have dwelt much on the advantage of rearing the requiſite population of any country from the ſmalleſt number of births. I have ſtated expreſſly, that a decreaſe of mortality at all ages is what we ought chiefly to aim at; and as the beſt criterion of happineſs and good government, inſtead of the largeneſs of the proportion of births, which was the uſual mode of judging, I have propoſed the ſmallneſs of the proportion dying under the age of puberty. Conſcious that I had never intentionally deviated from theſe principles, I might well be rather ſurpriſed to hear, that I had been conſidered by ſome as an enemy to the introduction of the vaccine innoculation, which is calculated to attain the very end, that I have uniformly conſidered as ſo deſirable. I have indeed intimated what I ſtill continue moſt firmly to believe, that if the reſources of the country would not permanently admit of a greatly accelerated rate of increaſe in the population (and whether they would or not muſt certainly depend upon other cauſes beſides the number of lives ſaved by the vaccine innoculation),[a] one of two things would

[a] It ſhould be remarked however, that a young perſon ſaved from death is more likely to contribute to the creation of freſh reſources than another birth. It is a great loſs of labour and food to begin over again. And univerſally it is true, that, under ſimilar circumſtances, that article will come the cheapeſt to market, which is accompanied by feweſt failures.

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happen, either an increaſed mortality of ſome other diſeaſes, or a diminution in the proportion of births. But I have expreſſed my conviction, that the latter effect would take place; and therefore conſiſtently with the opinions which I have always maintained, I ought to be, and am one of the warmeſt friends to the introduction of the cow-pox. In making every exertion, which I think likely to be effectual, to increaſe the comforts and diminiſh the mortality among the poor, I act in the moſt exact conformity to my principles. Whether thoſe are equally conſiſtent, who profeſs to have the ſame object in view, and yet meaſure the happineſs of nations by the large proportion of marriages and births, is a point which they would do well to conſider.

It has been ſaid by ſome, that the natural checks to population will always be ſufficient to keep it within bounds, without reſorting to any other aids; and one ingenious writer has remarked, that I have not deduced a ſingle original fact from real obſervations, to prove the inefficiency of the checks which already prevail.[a] Theſe remarks are correctly true, and are truiſms exactly of the ſame kind as the aſſertion, that man cannot live without food. For, undoubtedly as long as this continues to be a law of his nature, what are here called the natural

[a] I ſhould like much to know what deſcription of facts this gentleman had in view, when he made this obſervation. If I could have found one of the kind, which ſeems here to be alluded to, it would indeed have been truly original.

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checks cannot poſſibly fail of being effectual. Beſides the curious truiſm that theſe aſſertions involve, they proceed upon the very ſtrange ſuppoſition, that the *ultimate* object of my work is to check population, as if any thing could be more deſirable, than the moſt rapid increaſe of population unaccompanied by vice and miſery. But of courſe my ultimate object is to diminiſh vice and miſery, and any checks to population, which may have been ſuggeſted, are ſolely as means to accompliſh this end. To a rational being, the prudential check to population ought to be conſidered as equally natural with the check from poverty and premature mortality, which theſe gentlemen ſeem to think ſo entirely ſufficient and ſatisfactory; and it will readily occur to the intelligent reader, that one claſs of checks may be ſubſtituted for another, not only without eſſentially diminiſhing the population of a country, but even under a conſtantly progreſſive increaſe of it.[a]

On the poſſibility of increaſing very conſiderably the effective population of this country, I have expreſſed myſelf in ſome parts of my work more ſanguinely, perhaps, than experience would warrant. I have ſaid, that in the courſe of ſome centuries it might contain two or three times as many inha-

[a] Both Norway and Switzerland, where the preventive check prevails the moſt, are increaſing with ſome rapidity in their population; and in proportion to their means of ſubſiſtence, they can produce more males of a military age than any other country of Europe.

bitants

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bitants as at preſent, and yet every perſon be both better fed and better clothed.[a] And in the compariſon of the increaſe of population and food at the beginning of the Eſſay, that the argument might not ſeem to depend upon a difference of opinion reſpecting facts, I have allowed the produce of the earth to be unlimited, which is certainly going too far. It is not a little curious therefore, that it ſhould ſtill continue to be urged againſt me as an argument, that this country might contain two or three times as many inhabitants; and it is ſtill more curious, that ſome perſons, who have allowed the different ratios of increaſe on which all my principal concluſions are founded, have ſtill aſſerted, that no difficulty or diſtreſs could ariſe from population, till the productions of the earth could not be further increaſed. I doubt whether a ſtronger inſtance could readily be produced of the total abſence of the power of reaſoning, than this aſſertion, after ſuch a conceſſion, affords. It involves a greater abſurdity than the ſaying, that becauſe a farm can by proper management be made to carry an additional ſtock of four head of cattle every year, that therefore no difficulty or inconvenience would ariſe if an additional forty were placed in it yearly.

The power of the earth to produce ſubſiſtence is certainly not unlimited, but it is ſtrictly ſpeaking

[a] P. 512, 4to, edit. p. 274, vol. ii, 8vo edit.

indefinite;

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indefinite; that is, its limits are not defined, and the time will probably never arrive when we ſhall be able to ſay, that no further labour or ingenuity of man could make further additions to it. But the power of obtaining an additional quantity of food from the earth by proper management, and in a certain time, has the moſt remote relation imaginable to the power of keeping pace with an unreſtricted increaſe of population. The knowledge and induſtry, which would enable the natives of New Holland to make the beſt uſe of the natural reſources of their country, muſt, without an abſolute miracle, come to them gradually and ſlowly; and even then, as it has amply appeared, would be perfectly ineffectual as to the grand object; but the paſſions which prompt to the increaſe of population are always in full vigour, and are ready to produce their full effect even in a ſtate of the moſt helpleſs ignorance and barbariſm. It will be readily allowed, that the reaſon why New Holland, in proportion to its natural powers, is not ſo populous as China, is the want of thoſe human inſtitutions which protect property and encourage induſtry; but the miſery and vice which prevail almoſt equally in both countries, from the tendency of population to increaſe faſter than the means of ſubſiſtence, form a diſtinct conſideration, and ariſe from a diſtinct cauſe. They ariſe from the incomplete diſcipline of the human paſſions; and no perſon

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ſon with the ſlighteſt knowledge of mankind has ever had the hardihood to affirm, that human inſtitutions could completely diſcipline all the human paſſions. But I have already treated this ſubject ſo fully in the courſe of the work, that I am aſhamed to add any thing further here.

The next grand objection, which has been urged againſt me, is my denial of the *right* of the poor to ſupport.

Thoſe who would maintain this objection with any degree of conſiſtency are bound to ſhow, that the different ratios of increaſe with reſpect to population and food, which I attempted to eſtabliſh at the beginning of the Eſſay, are fundamentally erroneous; as on the ſuppoſition of their being true, the concluſion is inevitable. If it appear, as it muſt appear on theſe ratios being allowed, that it is not poſſible for the induſtry of man to produce ſufficient food for all that would be born, if every perſon were to marry at the time when he was firſt prompted to it by inclination, it follows irreſiſtibly, that all cannot have a *right* to ſupport. Let us for a moment ſuppoſe an equal diviſion of property in any country. If under theſe circumſtances one half of the ſociety were by prudential habits ſo to regulate their increaſe, that it exactly kept pace with their increaſing cultivation, it is evident, that they would always remain as rich as at firſt. If the other half during the ſame time married at the age of

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of puberty, when they would probably feel moſt inclined to it, it is evident, that they would ſoon become wretchedly poor. But upon what plea of juſtice or equity could this ſecond half of the ſociety claim a right, in virtue of their poverty, to any of the poſſeſſions of the firſt half? This poverty had ariſen entirely from their own ignorance or imprudence; and it would be perfectly clear, from the manner in which it had come upon them, that if their plea were admitted, and they were not ſuffered to feel the particular evils reſulting from their conduct, the whole ſociety would ſhortly be involved in the ſame degree of wretchedneſs. Any voluntary and temporary aſſiſtance, which might be given as a meaſure of charity by the richer members of the ſociety to the others, while they were learning to make a better uſe of the leſſons of nature, would be quite a diſtinct conſideration, and without doubt moſt properly applied; but nothing like a claim of *right* to ſupport can poſſibly be maintained, till we deny the premiſes; till we affirm, that the American increaſe of population is a miracle, and does not ariſe from the greater facility of obtaining the means of ſubſiſtence.[a]

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[a] It has been ſaid, that I have written a quarto volume to prove, that population increaſes in a geometrical, and food in an arithmetical ratio; but this is not quite true. The firſt of theſe propoſitions I conſidered as proved the moment the American increaſe was related, and the ſecond propoſition as ſoon as it was enunciated. The chief object of my work was to inquire what effects

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In fact whatever we may say in our declamations on this subject, almost the whole of our *conduct* is founded on the nonexistence of this right. If the poor had really a claim of *right* to support, I do not think, that any man could justify his wearing broad cloth, or eating as much meat as he likes for dinner; and those who assert this right, and yet are rolling in their carriages, living every day luxuriously, and keeping even their horses on food of which their fellow creatures are in want, must be allowed to act with the greatest inconsistency. Taking an individual instance without reference to consequences, it appears to me, that Mr. Godwin's argument is irresistible. Can it be pretended for a moment, that a part of the mutton which I expect to eat to day would not be much more beneficially employed on some hard-working labourer, who has not perhaps tasted animal food for the last week, or on some poor family, who cannot command sufficient food of any kind fully to satisfy the cravings of appetite? If these instances were not of a nature to multiply in proportion as such wants were indiscri-

effects these laws, which I considered as established in the first six pages, had produced, and were likely to produce on society; a subject not very readily exhausted. The principal fault of my details is, that they are not sufficiently particular; but this was a fault, which it was not in my power to remedy. It would be a most curious, and to every philosophical mind, a most interesting piece of information, to know the exact share of the full power of increase, which each existing check prevents; but at present I see no mode of obtaining such information.

minately

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minately gratified, the gratification of them, as it would be practicable, would be highly beneficial; and in this case I should not have the smallest hesitation in most fully allowing the right. But as it appears clearly, both from theory and experience, that, if the claim were allowed, it would soon increase beyond the *possibility* of satisfying it; and that the practical attempt to do so would involve the human race in the most wretched and universal poverty; it follows necessarily, that our conduct, which denies the right, is more suited to the present state of our being, than our declamations which allow it.

The great author of nature, indeed, with that wisdom which is apparent in all his works, has not left this conclusion to the cold and speculative consideration of general consequences. By making the passion of self-love beyond comparison stronger than the passion of benevolence, he has at once impelled us to that line of conduct, which is essential to the preservation of the human race. If all that might be born could be adequately supplied, we cannot doubt, that he would have made the desire of giving to others as ardent as that of supplying ourselves. But as under the present constitution of things this is not so, he has enjoined every man to pursue, as his primary object, his own safety and happiness, and the safety and happiness of those immediately connected with him; and it is highly instructive

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inſtructive to obſerve, that, in proportion as the ſphere contracts, and the power of giving effectual aſſiſtance increaſes, the deſire increaſes at the ſame time. In the caſe of children, who have certainly a claim of *right* to the ſupport and protection of their parents, we generally find parental affection nearly as ſtrong as ſelf-love: and except in a few anomalous caſes, the laſt morſel will be divided into equal ſhares.

By this wiſe proviſion the moſt ignorant are led to promote the general happineſs, an end which they would have totally failed to attain, if the moving principle of their conduct had been benevolence.[a] Benevolence indeed, as the great and conſtant ſource of action, would require the moſt perfect knowledge of cauſes and effects, and therefore can only be the attribute of the Deity. In a being ſo ſhort-ſighted as man, it would lead into the groſſeſt errors, and ſoon transform the fair and cultivated ſoil of civilized ſociety into a dreary ſcene of want and confuſion.

But though benevolence cannot in the preſent ſtate of our being be the great moving principle of human actions, yet as the kind corrector of the evils ariſing from the other ſtronger paſſion, it is eſſential to human happineſs, it is the balm and

[a] In ſaying this let me not be ſuppoſed to give the ſlighteſt ſanction to the ſyſtem of morals inculcated in the *Fable of the Bees*, a ſyſtem which I conſider as abſolutely falſe, and directly contrary to the juſt definition of virtue. The great art of Dr. Mandeville conſiſted in miſnomers.

conſolation

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conſolation and grace of human life, the ſource of our nobleſt efforts in the cauſe of virtue, and of our pureſt and moſt refined pleaſures. Conformably to that ſyſtem of general laws, according to which the Supreme Being appears with very few exceptions to act, a paſſion ſo ſtrong and general as ſelf-love could not prevail without producing much partial evil: and to prevent this paſſion from degenerating into the odious vice of ſelfiſhneſs,[a] to make us ſympathiſe in the pains and pleaſures of our fellow-creatures, and feel the ſame *kind* of intereſt in their happineſs and miſery as in our own, though diminiſhed in degree; to prompt us often to put ourſelves in their place, that we may underſtand their wants, acknowledge their rights, and do them good as we have opportunity; and to remind us continually, that even the paſſion which urges us to procure plenty for ourſelves was not implanted in us for our own excluſive advantage, but as the means of procuring the greateſt plenty for all; theſe appear to be the objects and offices of benevolence. In every ſituation of life there is ample room for the exerciſe of this virtue: and as each individual riſes in ſociety, as he advances in know-

[a] It ſeems proper to make a decided diſtinction between ſelf-love and ſelfiſhneſs, between that paſſion, which under proper regulations is the ſource of all honourable induſtry, and of all the neceſſaries and conveniences of life, and the ſame paſſion puſhed to exceſs, when it becomes uſeleſs and diſguſting, and conſequently vicious.

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ledge and excellence, as his power of benefitting others becomes greater, and the neceſſary attention to his own wants leſs, it will naturally come in for an increaſing ſhare among his conſtant motives of action. In ſituations of high truſt and influence it ought to have a very large ſhare, and in all public inſtitutions be the great moving principle. Though we have often reaſon to fear, that our benevolence may not take the moſt beneficial direction, we need never apprehend, that there will be too much of it in ſociety. The foundations of that paſſion, on which our preſervation depends, are fixed ſo deeply in our nature, that no reaſonings or addreſſes to our feelings can eſſentially diſturb it. It is juſt therefore and proper, that all the poſitive precepts ſhould be on the ſide of the weaker impulſe; and we may ſafely endeavour to increaſe and extend its influence as much as we are able, if at the ſame time we are conſtantly on the watch, to prevent the evil which may ariſe from its miſapplication.

The law which in this country entitles the poor to relief is undoubtedly different from a full acknowledgment of the natural right; and from this difference, and the many counteracting cauſes that ariſe from the mode of its execution, it will not of courſe be attended with the ſame conſequences. But ſtill it is an approximation to a full acknowledgment, and as ſuch appears to produce much evil, both with regard to the habits and the temper

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temper of the poor. I have in conſequence ventured to ſuggeſt a plan of gradual abolition, which, as might be expected, has not met with univerſal approbation. I can readily underſtand any objections that may be made to it on the plea, that, the right having been once acknowledged in this country, the revocation of it might at firſt excite diſcontents; and ſhould therefore moſt fully concur in the propriety of proceeding with the greateſt caution, and of uſing all poſſible means of preventing any ſudden ſhock to the opinions of the poor. But I have never been able to comprehend the grounds of the further aſſertion, which I have ſometimes heard made, that if the poor were really convinced, that they had no claim of right to relief, they would in general be more inclined to be diſcontented and ſeditious. On theſe occaſions the only way I have of judging is to put myſelf in imagination in the place of the poor man, and conſider how I ſhould feel in his ſituation. If I were told, that the rich by the laws of nature and the laws of the land were bound to ſupport me, I could not, in the firſt place, feel much obligation for ſuch ſupport; and in the next place, if I were given any food of an inferior kind, and could not ſee the abſolute neceſſity of the change, which would probably be the caſe, I ſhould think that I had good reaſon to complain. I ſhould feel, that the laws had been violated to my injury, and that

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I had been unjuſtly deprived of my right. Under theſe circumſtances, though I might be deterred by the fear of an armed force from committing any overt acts of reſiſtance, yet I ſhould conſider myſelf as perfectly juſtified in ſo doing, if this fear were removed; and the injury, which I believed that I had ſuffered, might produce the moſt unfavourable effects on my general diſpoſitions towards the higher claſſes of ſociety. I cannot indeed conceive any thing more irritating to the human feelings, than to experience that degree of diſtreſs, which, in ſpite of all our poor laws and benevolence, is not unfrequently felt in this country; and yet to believe, that theſe ſufferings were not brought upon me either by my own faults, or by the operation of thoſe general laws, which like the tempeſt, the blight, or the peſtilence, are continually falling hard on particular individuals, while others entirely eſcape, but were occaſioned ſolely by the avarice and injuſtice of the higher claſſes of ſociety.

On the contrary, if I firmly believe, that by the laws of nature, which are the laws of God, I had no claim of *right* to ſupport, I ſhould, in the firſt place, feel myſelf more ſtrongly bound to a life of induſtry and frugality; but if want, notwithſtanding, came upon me, I ſhould conſider it in the light of ſickneſs, as an evil incidental to my preſent ſtate of being, and which, if I could not avoid, it was my duty to bear with fortitude and reſignation. I ſhould know

from

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from paſt experience, that the beſt title I could have to the aſſiſtance of the benevolent would be the not having brought myſelf into diſtreſs by my own idleneſs or extravagance. What I received would have the beſt effect on my feelings towards the higher claſſes. Even if it were much inferior to what I had been accuſtomed to, it would ſtill, inſtead of an injury, be an obligation; and conſcious that I had no claim of *right*, nothing but the fear of abſolute famine, which would overcome all other conſiderations, could morally juſtify reſiſtance.

I cannot help believing, that, if the poor in this country were convinced, that they had no claim of *right* to ſupport; and yet in ſcarcities and all caſes of urgent diſtreſs were liberally relieved, which I think they would be; the bond which unites the rich with the poor would be drawn much cloſer than at preſent, and the lower claſſes of ſociety, as they would have leſs real reaſon for irritation and diſcontent, would be much leſs ſubject to theſe uneaſy ſenſations.

Among thoſe who have objected to my declaration, that the poor have no claim of *right* to ſupport, is Mr. Young, who, with a harſhneſs not quite becoming a candid inquirer after truth, has called my propoſal for the gradual abolition of the poor laws a horrible plan, and aſſerted, that the execution of it would be a moſt iniquitous proceeding. Let this plan however be compared for a moment with

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that which he himſelf and others have propoſed, of fixing the ſum of the poors rates, which on no account is to be increaſed. Under ſuch a law, if the diſtreſſes of the poor were to be aggravated tenfold, either by the increaſe of numbers or the recurrence of a ſcarcity, the ſame ſum would invariably be appropriated to their relief. If the ſtatute which gives the poor a right to ſupport were to remain unexpunged, we ſhould add to the cruelty of ſtarving them the extreme injuſtice of ſtill *profeſſing* to relieve them. If this ſtatute were expunged or altered, we ſhould virtually deny the right of the poor to ſupport, and only retain the abſurdity of ſaying, that they had a right to a certain ſum; an abſurdity on which Mr. Young juſtly comments with much ſeverity in the caſe of France.[a] In both caſes

[a] The National Aſſembly of France, though they diſapproved of the Engliſh poor laws, ſtill adopted their principle, and declared, that the poor had a right to pecuniary aſſiſtance; that the Aſſembly ought to conſider ſuch a proviſion as one of its firſt and moſt ſacred duties; and that with this view, an expenſe ought to be incurred to the amouut of 50 millions a year. Mr. Young juſtly obſerves, that he does not comprehend how it is poſſible to regard the expenditure of 50 millions a ſacred duty, and not extend that 50 to 100, if neceſſity ſhould demand it, the 100 to 200, the 200 to 300, and ſo on in the ſame miſerable progreſſion which has taken place in England. Travels in France, c. xv, p. 439.

I ſhould be the laſt man to quote Mr. Young againſt himſelf, if I thought he had left the path of error for the path of truth, as ſuch kind of inconſiſtency I hold to be highly praiſeworthy. But thinking on the contrary, that he has left truth for error, it is ſurely

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eaſes the hardſhips which they would ſuffer would be much more ſevere, and would come upon them in a much more unprepared ſtate, than upon the plan propoſed in the Eſſay.

According to this plan all that are already married, and even all that are engaged to marry during the courſe of the year, and all their children, would be relieved as uſual; and only thoſe who marry ſubſequently, and who of courſe may be ſuppoſed to have made better proviſion for contingencies, would be out of the pale of relief.

Any plan for the abolition of the poor laws muſt preſuppoſe a general acknowledgment, that they are eſſentially wrong, and that it is neceſſary to tread back our ſteps. With this acknowledgment, whatever objections may be made to my plan, in the too frequently ſhort-ſighted views of policy, I have no fear of comparing it with any other, that has yet been advanced, in point of juſtice and humanity; and of courſe the terms iniquitous and horrible "paſs by me like the idle wind, which I regard "not."

Mr. Young it would appear has now given up this plan. He has pleaded for the privilege of being inconſiſtent, and has given ſuch reaſons for it, that I am diſpoſed to acquieſce in them, provided

ſurely juſtifiable to remind him of his former opinions. We may recal to a vicious man his former virtuous conduct, though it would be uſeleſs and indelicate to remind a virtuous man of the vices which he had relinquiſhed.

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he confines the exercise of this privilege to different publications, in the interval between which he may have collected new facts; but I still think it not quite allowable in the same publication: and yet it appears, that in the very paper, in which he has so severely condemned my scheme, the same arguments, which he has used to reprobate it, are applicable with equal force against his own proposal, as he has there explained it.

He allows, that his plan can provide only for a certain number of families, and has nothing to do with the increase from them;[a] but in allowing this, he allows, that it does not reach the grand difficulty attending a provision for the poor. In this most essential point, after reprobating me for saying, that the poor have no claim of *right* to support, he is compelled to adopt the very same conclusion; and to own, that "it might be prudent to consider the "misery, to which the progressive population might "be subject, when there was not a sufficient de-"mand for them in towns and manufactures, as an "evil which it was absolutely and physically im-"possible to prevent." Now the sole reason why I say, that the poor have no claim of *right* to support, is the physical impossibility of relieving this progressive population. Mr. Young expressly acknowledges this physical impossibility; yet with an inconsistency scarcely credible still declaims against my declaration.

[a] Annals of Agriculture, No. 239, p. 219.

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The power which the ſociety may poſſeſs of relieving a certain portion of the poor is a conſideration perfectly diſtinct from the general queſtion; and I am quite ſure I have never ſaid, that it is not our duty to do all the good that is practicable. But this limited power of aſſiſting individuals cannot poſſibly eſtabliſh a general right. If the poor have really a natural right to ſupport, and if our preſent laws be only a confirmation of this right, it ought certainly to extend unimpaired to all who are in diſtreſs, to the increaſe from the cottagers as well as to the cottagers themſelves: and it would be a palpable injuſtice in the ſociety, to adopt Mr. Young's plan, and purchaſe from the preſent generation the diſfranchiſement of their poſterity.

Mr. Young objects very ſtrongly to that paſſage of the Eſſay,[a] in which I obſerve, that a man, who plunges himſelf into poverty and dependence by marrying without any proſpect of being able to maintain his family, has more reaſon to accuſe himſelf, than the price of labour, the pariſh, the avarice of the rich, the inſtitutions of ſociety, and the diſpenſations of Providence; except in as far as he has been deceived by thoſe, who ought to have inſtructed him. In anſwer to this, Mr. Young ſays, that the poor fellow is juſtified in every one of theſe complaints, that of Providence alone excepted; and that, ſeeing other cottagers living comfortably

[a] Book iv, c. iii, p. 506, 4to. edit. vol. ii, p. 264, 265, 8vo.

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with three or four acres of land, he has cauſe to accuſe inſtitutions, which deny him that which the rich could well ſpare, and which would give him all he wants.[a] I would beg Mr. Young for a moment to conſider how the matter would ſtand, if his own plan were completely executed. After all the commons had been divided as he has propoſed, if a labourer had more than one ſon, in what reſpect would the ſecond or third be in a different ſituation from the man that I have ſuppoſed? Mr. Young cannot poſſibly mean to ſay, that, if he had the very natural deſire of marrying at twenty, he would ſtill have a right to complain, that the ſociety did not give him a houſe and three or four acres of land. He has indeed expreſsly denied this abſurd conſequence, though in ſo doing he has directly contradicted the declaration juſt quoted.[b] The progreſſive population, he ſays, would, according to his ſyſtem, be cut off from the influence of the poor laws, and the encouragement to marry would remain exactly in that proportion leſs than at preſent. Under theſe circumſtances, without land, without the proſpect of pariſh relief, and with the price of labour only ſufficient to maintain two children, can Mr. Young ſeriouſly think, that the poor man, if he be really aware of his ſituation, does not do wrong in marrying, and ought not to accuſe himſelf for following

[a] Annals of Agriculture, No 239, p. 226.

[b] Annals of Agriculture, No. 239, p. 214.

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what Mr. Young calls the dictates of God, of nature, and of revelation? Mr. Young cannot be unaware of the wretchedneſs, that muſt inevitably follow a marriage under ſuch circumſtances. His plan makes no proviſion whatever for altering theſe circumſtances. He muſt therefore totally diſregard all the miſery ariſing from exceſſive poverty; or, if he allows, that theſe ſupernumerary members muſt neceſſarily wait, either till a cottage with land becomes vacant in the country, or that by emigrating to towns they can find the means of providing for a family, all the declamation, which he has urged with ſuch pomp againſt deferring marriage in my ſyſtem, would be equally applicable in his own ſyſtem. In fact, if Mr. Young's plan really attained the object, which it profeſſes to have in view, that of bettering the condition of the poor; and did not defeat its intent by encouraging a too rapid multiplication, and conſequently lowering the price of labour; it cannot be doubted, that not only the ſupernumerary members juſt mentioned, but all the labouring poor, muſt wait longer before they could marry, than they do at preſent.

The following propoſition may be ſaid to be capable of mathematical demonſtration. In a country the reſources of which will not permanently admit of an increaſe of population more rapid than the exiſting rate, no improvement in the condition of the people, which would tend to diminiſh mortality, could *poſſibly* take place without being accompanied by

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by a ſmaller proportion of births, ſuppoſing of courſe no particular increaſe of emigration.[a] To a perſon who has conſidered the ſubject, there is no propoſition in Euclid, which brings home to the mind a ſtronger conviction than this; and there is no truth ſo invariably confirmed by all the regiſters of births, deaths, and marriages, that have ever been collected. In this country it has appeared, that, according to the returns of the population Act, the proportion of births to deaths is about 4 to 3. This proportion with a mortality of 1 in 40[b] would double the population in 83 years and a half; and as we cannot ſuppoſe, that the country could admit of more than a quadrupled population in the next hundred and ſixty-ſix years, we may ſafely ſay, that its re-

[a] With regard to the reſources of emigration, I refer the reader to the 4th chapter, Book iii, of the Eſſay. Nothing is more eaſy than to ſay, that three fourths of the habitable globe are yet unpeopled, but it is by no means ſo eaſy to fill theſe parts with flouriſhing colonies. The peculiar circumſtances which have cauſed the ſpirit of emigration in the Highlands, ſo clearly explained in the able work of Lord Selkirk before referred to, are not of conſtant recurrence; nor is it by any means to be wiſhed, that they ſhould be ſo. And yet without ſome ſuch circumſtances, people are by no means very ready to leave their native ſoil, and will bear much diſtreſs at home, rather than venture on theſe diſtant regions. I am of opinion, that it is both the duty and intereſt of governments to facilitate emigration; but it would ſurely be unjuſt to oblige people to leave their country and kindred againſt their inclinations.

[b] Table iii, p. 238, 4to edit; and Table ii, p. 535, 536, vol. i, 8vo. edit.

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ſources will not allow of a permanent rate of increaſe greater than that which is taking place at preſent. But if this be granted, it follows as a direct concluſion, that if Mr. Young's plan, or any other, really ſucceeded in bettering the condition of the poor, and enabling them to rear more of their children, the vacancies in cottages in proportion to the number of expectants would happen ſlower than at preſent, and the age of marriage muſt inevitably be later. Thoſe, therefore, who propoſe plans for bettering the condition of the poor, and yet at the ſame time reprobate later or fewer marriages, are guilty of the moſt puerile inconſiſtency; and I cannot but be perfectly aſtoniſhed, that Mr. Young, who once underſtood the ſubject, ſhould have indulged himſelf in ſuch a poor declamation about paſſions, profligacy, burning, and ravens. It is in fact a ſilly, not to ſay impious, declamation againſt the laws of nature and the diſpenſations of Providence.

With regard to the expreſſion of later marriages, it ſhould always be recollected, that it refers to no particular age, but is entirely comparative. The marriages in England are later than in France, the natural conſequence of that prudence and reſpectability generated by a better government; and can we doubt, that good has been the reſult? The marriages in this country now are later than they were before the revolution, and I feel firmly perſuaded, that the increaſed healthineſs obſerved of late years could

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could not poſſibly have taken place without this accompanying circumſtance. Two or three years in the average age of marriage, by lengthening each generation, and tending, in a ſmall degree, both to diminiſh the prolifickneſs of marriages, and the number of born living to be married, may make a conſiderable difference in the rate of increaſe, and be adequate to allow for a conſiderably diminiſhed mortality. But I would on no account talk of any limits whatever. The only plain and intelligible meaſure with regard to marriage is the having a fair proſpect of being able to maintain a family. If the poſſeſſion of one of Mr. Young's cottages would give the labourer this proſpect, he would be quite right to marry; but if it did not, or if he could only obtain a rented houſe without land, and the wages of labour were only ſufficient to maintain two children, does Mr. Young, who cuts him off from the influence of the poor laws, preſume to ſay, that he would ſtill be right in marrying?[a]

Mr. Young has aſſerted, that I have made perfect chaſtity in the ſingle ſtate abſolutely neceſſary to the ſucceſs of my plan; but this ſurely is a miſrepreſentation. Perfect virtue is indeed abſolutely ne-

[a] The loweſt proſpect, with which a man can be juſtified in marrying, ſeems to be the power, when in health, of earning ſuch wages, as at the average price of corn will maintain the average number of living children to a marriage.

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ceſſary, to enable man to avoid *all* the moral and phyſical evils, which depend upon his own conduct; but who ever expected perfect virtue upon earth? I have ſaid what I conceive to be ſtrictly true, that it is our duty to defer marriage, till we can feed our children; and that it is alſo our duty, not to indulge ourſelves in vicious gratifications: but I have never ſaid, that I expected either, much leſs both of theſe duties, to be completely fulfilled. In this, and a number of other caſes, it may happen, that the violation of one of two duties will enable a man to perform the other with greater facility; but if they be really both duties, and both practicable, no power *on earth* can abſolve a man from the guilt of violating either. This can only be done by that God, who can weigh the crime againſt the temptation, and will temper juſtice with mercy. The moraliſt is ſtill bound to inculcate the practice of both duties, and each individual muſt be left to act under the temptations, to which he is expoſed, as his conſcience ſhall dictate. Whatever I may have ſaid in drawing a picture *profeſſedly* viſionary, for the ſake of illuſtration, in the practical application of my principles I have taken man as he is, with all his imperfections on his head. And thus viewing him, and knowing that ſome checks to population muſt exiſt, I have not the ſlighteſt heſitation in ſaying, that the prudential

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check to marriage is better than premature mortality. And in this deciſion I feel myſelf completely juſtified by experience.

In every inſtance that can be traced, in which an improved government has given to its ſubjects a greater degree of foreſight, induſtry, and perſonal dignity, theſe effects, under ſimilar circumſtances of increaſe, have invariably been accompanied by a diminiſhed proportion of marriages. This is a proof, that an increaſe of moral worth in the general character is not at leaſt *incompatible* with an increaſe of temptations with reſpect to one particular vice; and the inſtances of Norway, Switzerland, England, and Scotland, adduced in the laſt chapter of the Eſſay, ſhow, that in comparing different countries together, a ſmaller proportion of marriages and births does not neceſſarily imply the greater prevalence even of this particular vice. This is ſurely quite enough for the legiſlator. He cannot eſtimate with tolerable accuracy the degree, in which chaſtity in the ſingle ſtate prevails. His general concluſions muſt be founded on general reſults, and theſe are clearly in his favour.

To much of Mr. Young's plan, as he has at preſent explained it, I ſhould by no means object. The peculiar evil, which I apprehended from it, that of taking the poor from the conſumption of wheat, and feeding them on milk and potatoes, might certainly be avoided by a limitation of the number of cottages;

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cottages; and I entirely agree with him in thinking, that we ſhould not be deterred from making 500,000 families more comfortable, becauſe we cannot extend the ſame relief to all the reſt. I have indeed myſelf ventured to recommend a general improvement of cottages, and even the cow ſyſtem on a limited ſcale; and perhaps with proper precautions a certain portion of land might be given to a conſiderable body of the labouring claſſes.

If the law which entitles the poor to ſupport were to be repealed, any plan, which would tend to render ſuch repeal more palatable on its firſt promulgation, I ſhould moſt highly approve; and in this view, ſome kind of compact with the poor might be very deſirable. A plan of letting land to labourers under certain conditions has lately been tried in the pariſh of Long Newnton in Glouceſterſhire, and the reſult, with a general propoſal founded on it, has been ſubmitted to the public by Mr. Eſtcourt. The preſent ſucceſs has been very ſtriking; but in this, and every other caſe of the kind, we ſhould always bear in mind, that no experiment reſpecting a proviſion for the poor can be ſaid to be complete, till ſucceeding generations have ariſen.[a] I doubt if there ever has been an inſtance

[a] In any plan, particularly of a diſtribution of land, as a compenſation for the relief given by the poor laws, the ſucceeding generations would form the grand difficulty. All others would be perfectly trivial in compariſon. For a time every

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inſtance of any thing like a liberal inſtitution for the poor, which did not ſucceed on its firſt eſtabliſhment, however it might have failed afterwards. But this conſideration ſhould by no means deter us from making ſuch experiments, when preſent good is to be obtained by them, and a future overbalance of evil not juſtly to be apprehended. It ſhould only make us leſs raſh in drawing our inferences.

With regard to the general queſtion of the advantages to the lower claſſes of poſſeſſing land, it ſhould be recollected, that ſuch poſſeſſions are by no means a novelty. Formerly this ſyſtem prevailed in almoſt every country with which we are acquainted, and prevails at preſent in many countries, where the peaſants are far from being remarkable for their comforts, but are, on the contrary, very poor, and particularly ſubject to ſcarcities. With reſpect to this latter evil, indeed, it is quite obvious, that a peaſantry, which depends principally on its poſſeſſions in land, muſt be more expoſed to it, than one which depends on the general wages of labour. When a year of deficient crops occurs in a country of any extent and diverſity of ſoil, it is always partial, and ſome diſtricts are more affected than others. But when a bad

thing might go on very ſmoothly, and the rates be much diminiſhed; but afterwards, they would either increaſe again as rapidly as before, or the ſcheme would be expoſed to all the ſame objections which have been made to mine, without the ſame juſtice and conſiſtency to palliate them.

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crop of grafs, corn, or potatoes, or a mortality among cattle, falls on a poor man whofe principal dependance is on two or three acres of land, he is in the moft deplorable and helplefs fituation. He is comparatively without money to purchafe fupplies, and is not for a moment to be compared with the man who depends on the wages of labour, and who will of courfe be able to purchafe that portion of the general crop, whatever it may be, to which his relative fituation in the fociety entitles him. In Sweden where the farmers labourers are paid principally in land, and often keep two or three cows, it is not uncommon for the peafants of one diftrict to be almoft ftarving, while their neighbours at a little diftance are living in comparative plenty. It will be found indeed generally, that, in almoft all the countries which are particularly fubject to fcarcities and famines, either the farms are very fmall, or the labourers are paid principally in land. China, Indoftan and the former ftate of the Highlands of Scotland furnifh fome proofs among many others of the truth of this obfervation; and in reference to the fmall properties of France, Mr. Young himfelf in his tour particularly notices the diftrefs arifing from the leaft failure of the crops; and obferves, that fuch a deficiency as in England paffes almoft without notice, in France is attended with dreadful calamities.[a]

[a] Travels in France, vol. i, c. xii, p. 409. That country will probably be the leaft liable to fcarcities, in which agriculture is carried on as the moft flourifhing *manufacture* of the ftate.

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Should any plan therefore of aſſiſting the poor by land be adopted in this country, it would be abſolutely eſſential to its ultimate ſucceſs, to prevent them from making it their principal dependance. And this might probably be done by attending ſtrictly to the two following rules. Not to let the diviſion of land be ſo great, as to interrupt the cottager eſſentially in his uſual labours; and always to ſtop in the further diſtribution of land and cottages, when the price of labour, independent of any aſſiſtance from land, would not at the average price of corn maintain three, or at leaſt two children. Could the matter be ſo ordered, that the labourer in working for others ſhould ſtill continue to earn the ſame real command over the neceſſaries of life that he did before, a very great acceſſion of comfort and happineſs might accrue to the poor from the poſſeſſion of land, without any evil that I can foreſee at preſent. But if theſe points were not attended to, I ſhould certainly fear an approximation to the ſtate of the poor in France, Sweden, and Ireland; nor do I think, that any of the partial experiments that have yet taken place afford the ſlighteſt preſumption to the contrary. The reſult of theſe experiments is indeed exactly ſuch as one ſhould have expected. Who could ever have doubted, that, if without lowering the price of labour, or taking the labourer off from his uſual occupations, you could give him the produce of one or two acres of land and the benefit of a cow, you would decidedly raiſe his condition? But it by no means follows, that he would

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would retain this advantage, if the ſyſtem were ſo extended, as to make the land his principal dependance, to lower the price of labour, and, in the language of Mr. Young, to take the poor from the conſumption of wheat, and feed them on milk and potatoes. It does not appear to me ſo marvellous, as it does to Mr. Young, that the very ſame ſyſtem, which in Lincolnſhire and Rutlandſhire may produce now the moſt comfortable peaſantry in the Britiſh dominions, ſhould in the end, if extended without proper precautions, aſſimilate the condition of the labourers of this country to that of the lower claſſes of the Iriſh.

It is generally dangerous and impolitic in a government, to take upon itſelf to regulate the ſupply of any commodity in requeſt, and probably the ſupply of labourers forms no exception to the general rule. I would on no account therefore propoſe a poſitive law to regulate their increaſe; but as any aſſiſtance, which the ſociety might give them, cannot, in the nature of things, be unlimited, the line may fairly be drawn where we pleaſe; and with regard to the increaſe from this point, every thing would be left as before to individual exertion and individual ſpeculation.

If any plan of this kind were adopted by the government, I cannot help thinking, that it might be made the means of giving the beſt kind of encouragement and reward to thoſe who are em-

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ployed in our defence. If the period of enliſting were only for a limited time, and at the expiration of that time every perſon, who had conducted himſelf well, was entitled to a houſe and a ſmall portion of land, if a country labourer, and to a tenement in a town and a ſmall penſion, if an artificer, all inalienable, a very ſtrong motive would be held out to young men, not only to enter into the ſervice of their country, but to behave well in that ſervice; and in a ſhort time, there would be ſuch a martial population at home, as the unfortunate ſtate of Europe ſeems in a moſt peculiar manner to require. As it is only limited aſſiſtance, that the ſociety can poſſibly give, it ſeems in every reſpect fair and proper, that in regulating this limit ſome important end ſhould be attained.

If the poor laws be allowed to remain exactly in their preſent ſtate, we ought at leaſt to be aware, to what cauſe it is owing, that their effects have not been more pernicious than they are obſerved to be; that we may not complain of, or alter thoſe parts, without which we ſhould really not have the power of continuing them. The law which obliges each pariſh to maintain its own poor is open to many objections. It keeps the overſeers and churchwardens continually on the watch to prevent new comers, and conſtantly in a ſtate of diſpute with other pariſhes. It thus prevents the free circulation of labour from place to place, and renders its price very

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very unequal in different parts of the kingdom. It diſpoſes all landlords rather to pull down than to build cottages on their eſtates; and this ſcarcity of habitations in the country, by driving more to the towns than would otherwiſe have gone, gives a relative diſcouragement to agriculture, and a relative encouragement to manufactures. Theſe, it muſt be allowed, are no inconſiderable evils; but if the cauſe which occaſions them were removed, evils of much greater magnitude would follow. I agree with Mr. Young in thinking, that there is ſcarcely a pariſh in the kingdom, where, if more cottages were built, and let at any tolerably moderate rents, they would not be immediately filled with new couples. I even agree with him in thinking, that in ſome places this want of habitations operates too ſtrongly in preventing marriage. But I have not the leaſt doubt, that, conſidered generally, its operation in the preſent ſtate of things is moſt beneficial; and that it is almoſt excluſively owing to this cauſe, that we have been able ſo long to continue the poor laws. If any man could build a hovel by the road ſide, or on the neighbouring waſte, without moleſtation; and yet were ſecure, that he and his family would always be ſupplied with work and food by the pariſh, if they were not readily to be obtained elſewhere; I do not believe, that it would be long before the phyſical impoſſibility of execut-

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ing the letter of the poor laws would appear. It is of importance therefore to be aware, that it is not becauſe this or any other ſociety has really the power of employing and ſupporting all that might be born, that we have been able to continue the preſent ſyſtem; but becauſe by the indirect operation of this ſyſtem, not adverted to at the time of its eſtabliſhment, and frequently reprobated ſince, the number of births is always very greatly limited, and thus reduced within the pale of poſſible ſupport.

The obvious tendency of the poor laws is certainly to encourage marriage, but a cloſer attention to all their indirect as well as direct effects may make it a matter of doubt how far they really do this. They clearly tend, in their general operation, to diſcourage ſobriety and economy, to encourage idleneſs and the deſertion of children, and to put virtue and vice more on a level than they otherwiſe would be; but I will not preſume to ſay poſitively, that they tend to encourage population. It is certain, that the proportion of births in this country compared with others in ſimilar circumſtances is very ſmall; but this was to be expected from the ſuperiority of the government, the more reſpectable ſtate of the people, and the more general ſpread of a taſte for cleanlineſs and conveniences. And it will readily occur to the reader, that owing to theſe cauſes, combined with the twofold operation of the poor laws, it muſt be extremely difficult to aſcertain,

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tain, with any degree of preciſion, what has been their effect on population.[a]

The only argument of a general nature againſt the Eſſay, which ſtrikes me as having any conſiderable force, is the following. It is againſt the application of its principles, not the principles themſelves, and has not, that I know of, been yet advanced in its preſent form. It may be ſaid, that, according to my own reaſonings and the facts ſtated in my work, it appears, that the diminiſhed proportion of births, which I conſider as abſolutely neceſſary to the permanent improvement of the condition of the poor, invariably follows an improved government, and the greater degree of perſonal reſpectability which it gives to the lower claſſes of ſociety. Conſequently allowing the deſirableneſs of the end, it is not neceſſary, in order to obtain it, to riſk the promulgation of any new opinions, which may alarm the prejudices of the poor, and the effect of which we cannot with certainty foreſee; but we have

[a] The moſt favourable light, in which the poor laws can poſſibly be placed, is to ſay, that under all the circumſtances, with which they have been accompanied, they do not encourage marriage; and undoubtedly the returns of the Population Act ſeem to warrant the aſſertion. Should this be true, many of the objections which have been urged in the Eſſay againſt the poor laws will of courſe be removed; but I wiſh to preſs on the attention of the reader, that they will in that caſe be removed in ſtrict conformity to the general principles of the work, and in a manner to confirm, rather than to invalidate, the main poſitions which it has attempted to eſtabliſh.

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only to proceed in improving our civil polity, conferring the benefits of education upon all, and removing every obſtacle to the general extenſion of all thoſe privileges and advantages, which may be enjoyed in common; and we may be quite ſure, that the effect which I look forward to, and which can alone render theſe advantages permanent, will follow.

I acknowledge the truth and force of this argument, and have only to obſerve in anſwer to it, that it is difficult to conceive, that we ſhould not proceed with more celerity and certainty towards the end in view, if the principal cauſes, which tend to promote or retard it, were generally known. In particular, I cannot help looking forward to a very decided improvement in the habits and temper of the lower claſſes, when their real ſituation has been clearly explained to them; and if this were done gradually and cautiouſly, and accompanied with proper moral and religious inſtructions, I ſhould not expect any danger from it. I am always unwilling to believe, that the general diſſemination of truth is prejudicial. Caſes of the kind are undoubtedly conceivable, but they ſhould be admitted with very great caution. If the general preſumption in favour of the advantage of truth were once eſſentially ſhaken, all ardour in its cauſe would ſhare the ſame fate, and the intereſts of knowledge and virtue moſt decidedly ſuffer. It is beſides a ſpecies of

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arrogance not lightly to be encouraged, for any man to ſuppoſe, that he has penetrated further into the laws of nature than the great Author of them intended, further than is conſiſtent with the good of mankind.

Under theſe impreſſions I have freely given my opinions to the public. In the truth of the general principles of the Eſſay I confeſs that I feel ſuch a confidence, that, till ſomething has been advanced againſt them very different indeed from any thing that has hitherto appeared, I cannot help conſidering them as incontrovertible. With regard to the application of theſe principles the caſe is certainly different; and as dangers of oppoſite kinds are to be guarded againſt, the ſubject will of courſe admit of much latitude of opinion. At all events, however, it muſt be allowed, that, whatever may be our determination reſpecting the advantages or diſadvantages of endeavouring to circulate the truths on this ſubject among the poor, it muſt be highly advantageous, that they ſhould be known to all thoſe, who have it in their power to influence the laws and inſtitutions of ſociety. That the body of an army ſhould not in all caſes know the particulars of their ſituation may poſſibly be deſirable; but that the leaders ſhould be in the ſame ſtate of ignorance will hardly, I think, be contended.

If it be really true, that without a diminiſhed proportion

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proportion of births[a] we cannot attain any *permanent* improvement in the health and happineſs of the maſs of the people, and ſecure that deſcription of population, which, by containing a larger ſhare of adults, is beſt calculated to create freſh reſources, and conſequently to encourage a continued increaſe of efficient population; it is ſurely of the higheſt importance, that this ſhould be known, that, if we take no ſteps directly to promote this effect, we ſhould not at leaſt, under the influence of the former prejudices on this ſubject, endeavour to counteract it[b]. And

[a] It ſhould always be recollected, that a diminiſhed *proportion* of births may take place under a conſtant annual increaſe of the abſolute number. This is in fact exactly what has happened in England and Scotland during the laſt forty years.

[b] We ſhould be aware, that a ſcarcity of men, owing either to great loſſes, or to ſome particular and unuſual demand, is liable to happen in every country; and in no reſpect invalidates the general principle, that has been advanced. Whatever may be the tendency to increaſe, it is quite clear, that an extraordinary ſupply of men cannot be produced either in ſix months, or ſix years; but even with a view to a more than uſual ſupply, cauſes which tend to diminiſh mortality are not only more certain but more rapid in their effects, than direct encouragements to marriage. An increaſe of births may, and often does, take place, without the ultimate accompliſhment of our object; but ſuppoſing the births to remain the ſame, it is impoſſible for a diminiſhed mortality not to be accompanied by an increaſe of effective population.

We are very apt to be deceived on this ſubject by the almoſt conſtant

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And if it be thought unadviſeable to aboliſh the poor laws, it cannot be doubted, that a knowledge of thoſe general principles, which render them inefficient in their humane intentions, might be applied ſo far to modify them and regulate their execution, as to remove many of the evils with which they are accompanied, and make them leſs objectionable.

There is only one ſubject more which I ſhall notice, and that is rather a matter of feeling than of argument. Many perſons, whoſe underſtandings are not of that deſcription, that they can regulate

conſtant demand for labour, which prevails in every proſperous country; but we ſhould conſider, that in countries which can but juſt keep up their population, as the price of labour muſt be ſufficient to rear a family of a certain number, a ſingle man would have a ſuperfluity, and labour would be in conſtant demand at the price of the ſubſiſtence of an individual. It cannot be doubted, that in this country we could ſoon employ double the number of labourers, if we could have them at our own price; becauſe ſupply will produce demand, as well as demand ſupply. The preſent great extenſion of the cotton trade did not originate in an extraordinary increaſe of demand at the former prices, but in an increaſed ſupply at a much cheaper rate, which of courſe immediately produced an extended demand. As we cannot however obtain men at ſixpence a day by improvements in machinery, we muſt ſubmit to the neceſſary conditions of their rearing; and there is no man, who has the ſlighteſt feeling for the happineſs of the moſt numerous claſs of ſociety, or has even juſt views of policy on the ſubject, who would not rather chooſe, that the requiſite population ſhould be obtained by ſuch a price of labour, combined with ſuch habits, as would occaſion a very ſmall mortality, than from a great proportion of births, of which comparatively few would reach manhood.

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their belief or diſbelief by their likes or diſlikes, have profeſſed their perfect conviction of the truth of the general principles contained in the Eſſay; but at the ſame time have lamented this conviction, as throwing a darker ſhade over our views of human nature, and tending particularly to narrow our proſpects of future improvement. In theſe feelings I cannot agree with them. If, from a review of the paſt, I could not only believe, that a fundamental and very extraordinary improvement in human ſociety was poſſible, but feel a firm confidence that it would take place, I ſhould undoubtedly be grieved to find, that I had overlooked ſome cauſe, the operation of which would at once blaſt my hopes. But if the contemplation of the paſt hiſtory of mankind, from which alone we can judge of the future, renders it almoſt impoſſible to feel ſuch a confidence, I confeſs that I had much rather believe, that ſome real and deeply-ſeated difficulty exiſted, the conſtant ſtruggle with which was calculated to rouſe the natural inactivity of man, to call forth his faculties, and invigorate and improve his mind; a ſpecies of difficulty which it muſt be allowed is moſt eminently and peculiarly ſuited to a ſtate of probation; than that nearly all the evils of life might with the moſt perfect facility be removed, but for the perverſeneſs and wickedneſs of thoſe who influence human inſtitutions.[a]

A perſon

[a] The miſery and vice ariſing from the preſſure of the population too hard againſt the limits of ſubſiſtence, and the miſery and

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A perſon who held this latter opinion muſt neceſſarily live in a conſtant ſtate of irritation and diſappointment. The ardent expectations, with which he might begin life, would ſoon receive the moſt cruel check. The regular progreſs of ſociety, under the moſt favourable circumſtances, would to him appear ſlow and unſatisfactory; but inſtead even of this regular progreſs, his eye would be more frequently preſented with retrograde movements, and the moſt diſheartening reverſes. The changes, to which he had looked forward with delight, would be found big with new and unlooked-for evils, and the characters, on which he had repoſed the moſt confidence, would be ſeen frequently deſerting his favourite cauſe, either from the leſſons of experience or the temptation of power. In this ſtate of conſtant diſappointment, he would be but too apt to attribute every thing to the worſt motives; he would be inclined to give up the cauſe of improvement in deſpair; and judging of the whole from a part, nothing but a peculiar goodneſs of heart, and amiableneſs of diſpoſition, could preſerve him from

and vice ariſing from promiſcuous intercourſe, may be conſidered as the Scylla and Charybdis of human life. That it is poſſible for each individual to ſteer clear of both theſe rocks is certainly true, and a truth which I have endeavoured ſtrongly to maintain; but that theſe rocks do not form a difficulty independent of human inſtitutions, no perſon with any knowledge of the ſubject can venture to aſſert.

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that ſickly and diſguſting miſanthropy, which is but too frequently the end of ſuch characters.

On the contrary, a perſon who held the other opinion, as he would ſet out with more moderate expectations, would of courſe be leſs liable to diſappointment. A compariſon of the beſt with the worſt ſtates of ſociety, and the obvious inference from analogy, that the beſt were capable of further improvement, would conſtantly preſent to his mind a proſpect ſufficiently animating, to warrant his moſt perſevering exertions. But aware of the difficulties with which the ſubject was ſurrounded, knowing how often in the attempt to attain one object ſome other had been loſt, and that though ſociety had made rapid advances in ſome directions, it had been comparatively ſtationary in others, he would be conſtantly prepared for failures. Theſe failures, inſtead of creating deſpair, would only create knowledge; inſtead of checking his ardour, would only give it a wiſer and more ſucceſsful direction; and having founded his opinion of mankind on broad and general grounds, the diſappointment of any particular views would not change this opinion; but even in declining age he would probably be found believing as firmly in the reality and general prevalence of virtue, as in the exiſtence and frequency of vice; and to the laſt, looking forward with a juſt confidence to thoſe improvements in ſociety, which the hiſtory of the paſt, in ſpite of all the

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the reverſes with which it is accompanied, ſeems clearly to warrant.

It may be true, that if igorance is bliſs, 'tis folly to be wiſe; but if ignorance be not bliſs, as in the preſent inſtance; if all falſe views of ſociety muſt not only impede decidedly the progreſs of improvement, but neceſſarily terminate in the moſt bitter diſappointments to the individuals who form them; I ſhall always think, that the feelings and proſpects of thoſe, who make the juſteſt eſtimates of our future expectations, are the moſt conſolatory; and that the characters of this deſcription are happier themſelves, at the ſame time that they are beyond compariſon more likely to contribute to the improvement and happineſs of ſociety.[a]

[a] While the laſt ſheet of this Appendix was printing, I heard with ſome ſurpriſe, that an argument had been drawn from the Principle of Population in favour of the ſlave trade. As the juſt concluſion from that principle appears to me to be exactly the contrary, I cannot help ſaying a few words on the ſubject.

If the only argument againſt the ſlave trade had been, that, from the mortality it occaſioned, it was likely to unpeople Africa, or extinguiſh the human race, ſome comfort with regard to theſe fears might, indeed, be drawn from the Principle of Population; but as the neceſſity of the abolition has never, that I know of, been urged on the ground of theſe apprehenſions, a reference to the laws which regulate the increaſe of the human ſpecies was certainly moſt unwiſe in the friends of the ſlave trade.

The abolition of the ſlave trade is defended principally by the two following arguments:

1ſt. That the trade to the coaſt of Africa for ſlaves, together with their ſubſequent treatment in the Weſt Indies, is productive

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of ſo much human miſery, that its continuance is diſgraceful to us as men and as Chriſtians.

2d. That the culture of the Weſt India iſlands could go on with equal advantage and much greater ſecurity, if no further importation of ſlaves were to take place.

With regard to the firſt argument, it appears, in the Eſſay on the Principle of Population, that ſo great is the tendency of mankind to increaſe, that nothing but ſome phyſical or moral check, operating in an *exceſſive* and *unuſual* degree, can permanently keep the population of a country below the average means of ſubſiſtence. In the Weſt India iſlands a conſtant recruit of labouring negroes is neceſſary; and conſequently the immediate checks to population muſt operate with *exceſſive* and *unuſual* force. All the checks to population were found reſolvable into moral reſtraint, vice, and miſery. In a ſtate of ſlavery moral reſtraint cannot have much influence; nor in any ſtate will it ever continue permanently to diminiſh the population. The whole effect, therefore, is to be attributed to the *exceſſive* and *unuſual* action of vice and miſery; and a reference to the facts contained in the Eſſay incontrovertibly proves, that the condition of the ſlaves in the Weſt Indies, taken altogether, is moſt wretched, and that the repreſentations of the friends of the abolition cannot eaſily have been exaggerated.

It will be ſaid, that the principal reaſon, why the ſlaves in the Weſt Indies conſtantly diminiſh, is, that the ſexes are not in equal numbers, a conſiderable majority of males being always imported; but this very circumſtance decides at once on the cruelty of their ſituation, and muſt neceſſarily be one powerful cauſe of their degraded moral condition.

It may be ſaid alſo, that many towns do not keep up their numbers, and yet the ſame objection is not made to them on that account. But the caſes will admit of no compariſon. If, for the ſake of better ſociety or higher wages, people are willing to expoſe themſelves to a leſs pure air, and greater temptations to vice, no hardſhip is ſuffered, that can reaſonably be complained of. The ſuperior mortality of towns falls principally upon children,

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and is ſcarcely noticed by people of mature age. The ſexes are in equal numbers, and every man after a few years of induſtry may look forward to the happineſs of domeſtic life. If during the time that he is thus waiting, he acquires vicious habits which indiſpoſe him to marriage, he has nobody to blame except himſelf. But with the negroes the caſe is totally different. The unequal number of the ſexes ſhuts out at once the majority of them from all chance of domeſtic happineſs. They have no hope of this kind to ſweeten their toils, and animate their exertions; but are neceſſarily condemned either to unceaſing privation, or to the moſt vicious exceſſes; and thus ſhut out from every cheering proſpect, we cannot be ſurpriſed, that they are in general ready to welcome that death, which ſo many meet with in the prime of life.

The ſecond argument is no leſs powerfully ſupported by the Principle of Population than the firſt. It appears, from a very general ſurvey of different countries, that under every form of government, however unjuſt and tyrannical, in every climate of the known world, however apparently unfavourable to health, it has been found, that population, with the ſole exception above alluded to, has been able to keep itſelf up to the level of the means of ſubſiſtence. Conſequently, if by the abolition of the trade to Africa the ſlaves in the Weſt Indies were placed only in a *tolerable* ſituation, if their civil condition and moral habits were only made to *approach* to thoſe, which prevail among the maſs of the human race in the worſt-governed countries of the world, it is contrary to the general laws of nature to ſuppoſe, that they would not be able by procreation fully to ſupply the effective demand for labour; and it is difficult to conceive, that a population ſo raiſed would not be in every point of view preferable to that which exiſts at preſent.

It is perfectly clear, therefore, that a conſideration of the laws, which govern the increaſe and decreaſe of the human ſpecies, tends to ſtrengthen, in the moſt powerful manner, all the arguments in favour of the abolition.

With regard to the ſtate of ſociety among the African nations,

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it will readily occur to the reader, that, in deſcribing it, the queſtion of the ſlave trade was foreign to my purpoſe; and I might naturally fear, that if I entered upon it I ſhould be led into too long a digreſſion. But certainly all the facts, which I have mentioned, and which are taken principally from Park, if they do not abſolutely *prove*, that the wars in Africa are excited and aggravated by the traffic on the coaſt, tend powerfully to confirm the *ſuppoſition*. The ſtate of Africa, as I have deſcribed it, is exactly ſuch as we ſhould expect in a country, where the capture of men was conſidered as a more advantageous employment than agriculture or manufactures. Of the ſtate of theſe nations ſome hundred years ago, it muſt be confeſſed, that we have little knowledge that we can depend upon: but allowing that the regular plundering excurſions, which Park deſcribes, are of the moſt ancient date; yet it is impoſſible to ſuppoſe, that any circumſtance which, like the European traffic, muſt give additional value to the plunder thus acquired, would not powerfully aggravate them, and effectually prevent all progreſs towards a happier order of things. As long as the nations of Europe continue barbarous enough to purchaſe ſlaves in Africa, we may be quite ſure, that Africa will continue barbarous enough to ſupply them.

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